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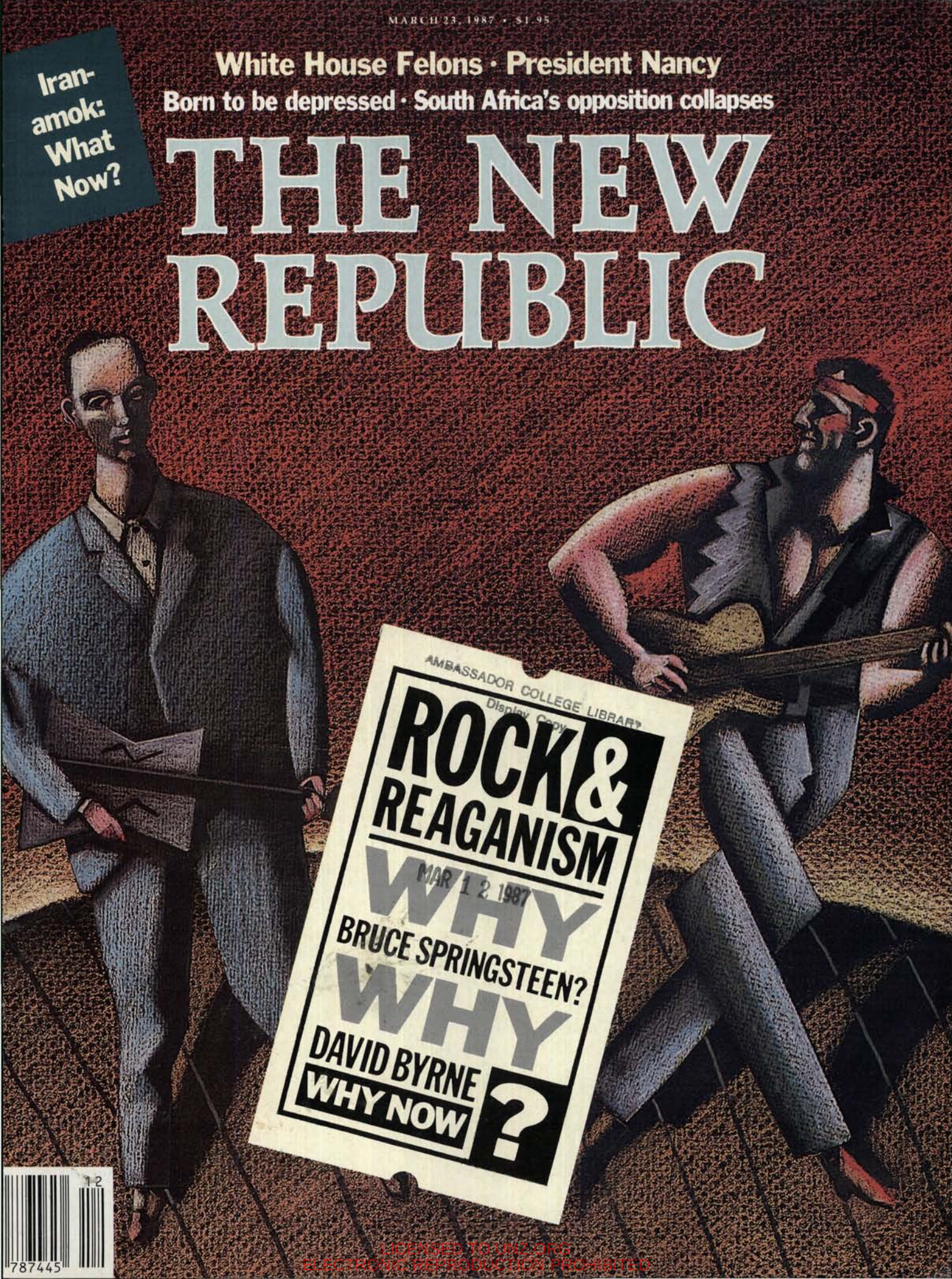

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Toward a more competitive America—IV

Did we shoot ourselves in the foot?

During our discussion of productivity in recent weeks, we have cited the budget deficit, the trade imbalance, and the loss of ground to foreign competition as major problems facing the economy. In seeking solutions, we think Americans have to be asking whether we've shot ourselves in the foot.

As we've said earlier in this series, most economists agree that this nation's trade deficit—its apparent inability to compete effectively against foreign producers—stems from the huge budget deficit, which keeps both real interest rates and the value of the dollar abnormally high. (While the dollar has plunged against the West German and Japanese currencies in the past year, it has remained relatively stable against the currencies of most of our other major trading partners, including the Canadians, Brazilians, South Koreans, and Taiwanese.)

But our national leaders have done little to address the deficit problem. Political demands seem to outweigh the economic ones as Congress and the Administration submit differing budget proposals, and the debate centers largely on cosmetics rather than fundamentals.

Instead of a serious attack on the deficit, Congress devoted two years to tax "reform." But unlike the Japanese, America's leaders refused to consider the consumption tax that could make genuine and lasting inroads on the budget deficit and provide a strong incentive to save and invest. Our leaders still quibble over how much fat there remains to be trimmed from federal spending. In our view the probable answer is lots. But we remain convinced that additional revenue sources may also have to be found—and that a consumption tax is one we ought to seriously consider.

And the tax changes Congress labored so mightily to enact seem to have been written with no consideration of America's competitive position in world markets. We've already cited the major ways in which tax "reform" hinders the ability of business to invest and thereby increase productivity: the loss of the investment tax credit and the stretchout of depreciation schedules. We've also cited the ways it hinders savings: by limiting IRAs and 401(k) plans.

We can understand a Congress anxious to close real or perceived tax loopholes at a time of budget deficits. But we would expect the feeling of belt-tightening and reduced expectations also to become part of the congressional mentality. So far, it hasn't.

In our industry alone, in addition to the $10 billion impact over five years of tax reform, we face additional millions in new taxes for the Superfund to clean up orphan dumps. We face added refining costs related to the removal of lead from regular gasoline. And in the congressional hopper are additional proposals—costly ones—involving waste treatment, acid rain, and federal clean air standards. Other industries face similar mandated expenditures.

We recognize the need to address environmental concerns in a timely way. But those concerns are everyone's. So is national competitiveness. For our leaders not to consider the impact on trade when they legislate is counterproductive. Special taxes and other burdens can limit the ability of American companies to meet the threat of foreign competition—and thereby worsen the nation's economic problems. Societal problems, we feel, should be paid for in a simple, direct and fair way—out of the general treasury.

When Americans counsel nations whose debt burdens seem almost too heavy to be met, the advice is usually pretty standard—and pretty sensible. Cut spending, pull in your horns, sacrifice instant gratification for future productivity, and export all you can to meet your obligations and earn investment capital. Well, America, for the first time since before World War I, has joined the ranks of debtor nations. But our leaders don't even give us the same advice they give others, let alone heed it. And that, we think, is another prime example of how we may have shot ourselves in the foot.

Next: How to stimulate investment and growth.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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CORRESPONDENCE

IN JACKSON'S WORDS

To the editors:

TNR readers are entitled to a more accurate description of my views on racial violence and other issues than appeared in "On the Beach" (February 23). My statement that "of course the killers of Howard Beach must be punished" was made in the context of a specific argument: that racial violence is already illegal in this country, while economic violence remains a serious and growing problem. Throughout my discussion of this question I have opposed racial polarization and pointed out the similar experiences of white, black, and Hispanic working people. I support specific answers for these economic concerns, including plant closing legislation, employee ownership of targeted plants, and joint ventures between communities and industries. These proposals and others were included in the *New York Times* article quoted.

Like TNR, I dislike the phrase "The President of Black America," which I consider separatist and demeaning. It was *Washington Post* language, not mine; I am surprised that professional journalists would hold the subject responsible for someone else's headlines.

Finally, your editorial suggests that you are "tired of hearing" my comments on the Holocaust. Some of us, as we grow older, grow in other dimensions as well. TNR refuses even to consider reconciliation.

REV. JESSE L. JACKSON
National Rainbow Coalition, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

GRADING THE CURVE

To the editors:

Most governors would agree that after a decade of effort to improve education at the state level it is time for more aggressive federal involvement. But contrary to what you imply in "The Learning Curve" (February 23), we do not need another seed catalog of federal grant programs and prescriptive regulations. Excellent schools don't come from Washington. They come from communities, and what the communities need from the federal government is nothing more than a broad articulation of goals and the flexibility to find creative ways to fund them.

The goals concern teacher competence, the measurement of student achievement, the reduction of dropout rates, and a lengthening of the school year. The money to get the job done should come from the following exchange: the federal government should assume the entire state burden of Medicaid (currently a joint federal-state responsibility), on the condition that states apply the windfall to teacher salaries and improvements in the schools. That exchange would free up about $20 billion a year—without turning the Department of Education into a bureaucratic national school board.

BRUCE BABBITT
Phoenix, Arizona

To the editors:

In "The Learning Curve," you noted that Education Secretary William Bennett has argued often "that colleges and universities have taken advantage of increases in student aid funding to raise their fees." The facts, however, do not support him. In a December 4, 1986, article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Terry W. Hartle and Arthur M. Hauptman state, "According to Bennett's theory, college prices should rise fastest when student aid grows the most. It has not worked that way." From 1970 to 1980, they note, tuition rose about 90 percent; consumer prices, 114 percent; and federal student aid, 314 percent. Since 1980 tuitions have grown 77 percent; consumer prices, 31 percent; and federal student aid, 17 percent. They write, "If anything, it looks as if the colleges have got the relationship backward. They held prices below inflation when federal aid was growing and increased prices sharply when student-aid spending slowed." Father Theodore Hesburgh recently observed that in reality, colleges must increase tuitions when federal student aid is reduced in order to provide support for needy students.

I have trouble reconciling your praise of Bennett with your statements that "if we want better education, we will have to spend more" and "Why can't Washington politicians just agree to stop pretending it's any other way?" He is the primary Washington politician spreading the myth that we are already spending enough money at all levels of education.

H. M. WILLIS
Burke, Virginia

THE NEH 'MODEL'

To the editors:

For the second time THE NEW REPUBLIC has given its readers a distorted view of grants awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities ("A Taste for Pork" by Crocker Coulson, March 2). Several months ago you criticized an NEH-funded symposium on the grounds that it was organized by the conservative Federalist Society. The Endowment wrote a letter to THE NEW REPUBLIC explaining that all parts of the political spectrum were represented at the conference: Judge Abner Mikva was there, for example, as was David Goldberger, former legal director of the Illinois ACLU, and former Attorney General Griffin Bell.

Your magazine never published this letter; and now, you are pursuing the same tack—with as little justification. To cite just two examples: you say that an NEH grant to the Claremont Institute allowed that organization to put together conferences "pushing its conservative views on the Constitution." But among the scholars who have participated at Claremont conferences are J. R. Pole, Don Fehrenbacher, Joyce Appleby, John Diggins, Henry Steele Commager, Wilson Carey McWilliams, and Robert Bellah—a group it would be impossible to assign a single agenda.

In the case of the grant received by Public Research Syndicated to distribute articles on the Constitution, you list three of the authors whose work PRS has distributed: Edwin Meese, William French Smith, and Ronald Reagan. But you might have cited dozens of others, including Gordon Wood, Richard Morris, William Brennan, Tip O'Neill, Frederick Douglass, and James Madison.

Since this information is easily available, I can only conclude that you choose to present what supports your thesis and to suppress what does not. By contrast, the NEH projects you cite are characterized by the free flow of information and the competition of ideas.

I recommend them to you as models.

LYNNE V. CHENEY
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities
Washington, D.C.

The editors reply:

The point of the article was that right-wing groups, which have made a great

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issue of government grants to liberal groups, are often happy enough to overlook their anti-government principles and accept grants to advance their own ideological agendas. Ms. Cheney may wish to believe that conferences, etc., sponsored by groups like the Claremont Institute advance no ideological agenda because they are "balanced," but we assure her that the sponsors themselves are under no such illusion, or they wouldn't be bothering.

Mapp And Miranda

To the editors:

In "Viva Miranda" (February 16), Jeffrey Toobin correctly observes that the current plan of the Reagan Justice Department to overturn *Miranda* is "bad law, bad police policy, and bad politics." But he seems less sure about retaining the exclusionary rule, which he believes is a "more legitimate target of the Meese Justice Department." Yet like *Miranda*, the exclusionary rule curbs police abuses, and there are practical considerations for preserving it. Exclusion was recognized by the Supreme Court in 1914 (*Weeks v. U.S.*) as necessary if constitutional safeguards were to have any meaning. While exclusion was limited originally to federal action, *Mapp v. Ohio*, in 1961, mandated one constitutional standard for both the federal and state governments with respect to searches and seizures.

Mapp and *Miranda* have also been instrumental in the professionalization of law enforcement. Never before have police been more educated and conscious of civil liberties. Tampering with either may not return us to the use of general warrants or the rack and screw, but it may endanger the ongoing efforts of law enforcement to achieve professional status.

Richard T. Marquise
Graduate Director, Administration of Justice
The Newport College
Newport, Rhode Island

Rethinking Racism

To the editors:

The editorial "Rethinking Race" (February 9) is disturbing with respect to the analysis of black racism. You assert that the black lawyers and other activists who rallied to the side of the victims of the Howard Beach violence were "black racists" because they advocated boycotts and demonstrations and refused to cooperate with the prosecution unless a special prosecutor was appointed. These were nonviolent acts of political protest in the spirit of the First Amendment. They were not based on notions of black racial superiority or white inferiority, or on a belief in white criminality. It is shallow to equate the nonviolent acts of protest, however ill-advised you find them, with the acts of racial violence by whites at Howard Beach.

Walter L. Gordon III
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:

I am sorry to say that I agree, in part, when you state in "Rethinking Race" that "the culture of poverty has taken on a life of its own," and that "the responsibility for that culture's persistence ... belongs to blacks themselves." But where you say that blacks "are responsible for overcoming [poverty]" is where we disagree. It is a sad fact that the establishment cannot be trusted to give equal employment opportunity to qualified minorities without the specter of civil rights laws. Many assert that opportunity should be colorblind and harp on the fact that education and attitude are the solution to the poverty chain; these are the same individuals who will scrutinize "eligible" minorities more closely than other applicants. We have accepted our "responsibility," now you accept yours.

Linda D. Belton
Washington, D.C.

Churchill's Pawn

To the editors:

Paul Kennedy asserts, in his recent review of Martin Gilbert's *Winston S. Churchill: The Road to Victory 1939-1945* ("Winnie, Vidi, Vici," February 16), that Churchill was "committed in honor to the Poles, and anxious to safeguard their security after the war." This noble attitude is often attributed to Churchill; Churchill himself made many declarations of concern during the war for Poland's future. Public rhetoric, however, did not accurately reflect actual policies and goals.

When Churchill and Anthony Eden met with Stalin in Moscow in October 1944, the prime minister made a startling proposal to his host: Britain would agree to the Soviet domination of Poland at the end of the war. In exchange, Stalin would be expected to support Britain's efforts to regain control of her colonial possessions in the Far East and Mediterranean. Churchill was particularly worried that the Kuomintang, with U.S. backing, would attempt to seize control of Hong Kong after Japan's surrender, and felt that support from the U.S.S.R. would strengthen Britain's hand in the event of a showdown with China.

This is not to suggest that Churchill as a statesman was any more inclined to a cynical realpolitik than his counterparts in the United States and the Soviet Union. His backroom dealings with respect to Poland simply reflected the tendency among all the major powers to regard less powerful nations as transferable shares with only nominally sovereign rights.

Peter R. Obermark
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Department of History
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

Defending 'Amerika'

To the editors:

Janet Maslin ("Situation Commie," February 23) finds it incredible that in "Amerika" a former inmate of a gulag mental hospital might be "subdued," that a small-town waitress would not be, that a mother would take pride in her child's accomplishments—even when they are not of *Flashdance* quality! Can television discuss serious issues? Not unless, Ms. Maslin assures us, it gets rid of all those nasty "red corsets." Give us a break. "Amerika" is pretty good TV. Sure it relies on some improbabilities. But Robinson Crusoe probably wouldn't have survived the shipwreck, either. So what?

What "Amerika" does accomplish is to show how people are apt to cope under such circumstances. Some would be resisters, some collaborators. Most would be accommodators. And all would express justification for their behavior, but not very well.

George E. Ertel
Chicago, Illinois

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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FROM WASHINGTON

THE OTHER SCANDAL

As their lawyers tell it, the executives of Staley Continental, Inc., were sitting around bucolic Rolling Meadows, Illinois, last November minding their own business, which happens to be refining corn and other food products, when the man from Drexel Burnham Lambert called. They already knew that something funny was going on because the daily volume of trading in their stock had suddenly shot from around 74,000 shares to ten times that amount. The fellow from Drexel, the buccaneering investment bank, announced that his firm had acquired a "large position" in Staley and wanted a "relationship." Drexel proposed a leveraged buy-out, in which Staley's management and other investors would borrow a huge pile of money (in the form of "junk bonds") to buy the company from its public shareholders, and Drexel would earn a large fee.

Management wasn't interested. It wanted to proceed with a planned stock offering, using another investment bank. The man from Drexel warned that "you would hurt us" by doing this and said he "would hate to see Drexel have to sell into the stock offering," but management went ahead. Suddenly Staley's stock price started to tumble, and ultimately the company had to resort to a more expensive method of raising money. Furious, Staley sued.

It's not clear what, if anything, is illegal about this episode. Staley is suing under the federal racketeering statute, and has done its best to make the whole thing look like a shakedown. Drexel's posture is one of innocent bewilderment that anyone should take offense at its desire to be helpful. But valid or not, this lawsuit signals the next direction of the Wall Street scandal. Call it Greedamok.

On Wall Street, it's said, they're not even talking about the Tower Commission. Hard to believe, I know. But they have troubles of their own. The last time I wrote about this stuff, nine months ago, my point was that "insider trading" laws can never make the stock market a fair game. There is an impossible contradiction between the market's proper role as an efficient processor of information into share prices and the need for at least the appearance of a level playing field in order to entice ordinary non-professional investors to put their money in stocks. Attempts to draw any logical line between "good" and "bad" information are futile.

That remains true. But recent cases take us far from the inherent ambiguities of insider trading. Martin Siegel allegedly accepted suitcases full of cash from Ivan Boesky in exchange for tips. Nothing ambiguous about that. Recent cases change the coloration of the scandal in other ways, too. The arrests have moved from fringe figures like the "yuppies" and the mysterious Boesky to senior officers of major firms. More important, the scandal no longer is a matter of individual misbehavior. It now implicates the central functions of the investment banks.

The *Wall Street Journal* notes editorially that Siegel, head of mergers and acquisitions at Kidder Peabody at the time of his indiscretions, was actually serving the interests of his clients by leaking information to speculators like Boesky. Manipulating the stock price is part of the game in staging or defending a takeover. Since the courts have held that the crime of insider trading must involve the violation of a "fiduciary duty" to someone—and not just the rip-off of anonymous players in the market—the *Journal* asks what exactly Siegel and Boesky did wrong. A better question is whether the law needs to be rewritten if people are off the hook just because their manipulations are part of the standard "mergers and acquisitions" practice.

In recent years most of the big firms have opened "arbitrage" departments to speculate in stocks, while building an ostensible "Chinese Wall" between these people and the "mergers and acquisitions" people who have the very information the first group is speculating about. Martin Siegel, we now learn, was secretly in charge of setting up an arbitrage department at Kidder Peabody while head of M&A. So much for the Chinese Wall. But the very concept is absurd. To order people to find out what their co-workers already know, and expect them not to ask, is a game too silly to work when millions of dollars are at stake.

Takeover artists and their defenders protest that there is no logical connection between insider trading abuses and corporate takeovers themselves. They argue that new government restrictions on merger activity would amount to punishing the victims. Stockholders, already cheated by inside traders, would then be denied the benefits of corporate restructuring. Why, they ask, should Ivan Boesky's misbehavior lead to greater job security for inept corporate management?

In general the Boone Pickens types are right that takeover pressure is good for the stockholders and good for the economy. But it's clear that the culture of investment banks, with their enormous fees and their enormous opportunities for other profits, legal and illegal, has taken on a life of its own in ways that serve no larger economic purpose.

"Greenmail," where companies buy back a raider's stock at a huge premium, certainly is no service to the ordinary shareholders. Nor is the "two-tier offer," in which market professionals who move fast get one deal for their stock and the rest of the shareholders get a less desirable one. Perhaps most insidious are leveraged buy-outs like the one Drexel allegedly tried to impose on Staley. There is no change of management; just a change of ownership. The shareholders get bought out at what generally turns out to be a remarkably low price, certified as "fair" by an investment bank. Management babbles about the stimulating effects of private ownership and freedom to consider long-term time horizons. Then the firm is often "taken public" again in a year or two, at a huge profit.

We don't want to outlaw greed, even if we could. Greed is what makes capitalism tick. Felix Rohatyn, writing in the *New York Review of Books*, warns that "a cancer has been spreading ... called greed" in the financial community. Of course, not all of us are blessed with Rohatyn's magical ability to make millions of dollars every year without being greedy. (Look, Ma, no greed!) The reforms we need are ones that will channel natural human greed into more productive outlets.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MARCH 23, 1987

WHITE HOUSE OUTLAWS

Throughout the Iran initiative, significant questions of law do not appear to have been adequately addressed . . .
—from the Tower Commission report

In the immediate aftermath of the Tower Commission report, attention has centered on President Reagan's "management style," to use the prevailing euphemism. Well, the Constitution doesn't say the president has to be a candidate for Mensa. It does, however, admonish him to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." The Tower panel's mandate didn't include determining the criminal culpability of anyone involved in the byzantine Iranamok dealings, and it was careful not to offer any hard-and-fast judgments on such matters. Nevertheless, the report contains ample evidence that the sloppiness of the president and his men repeatedly shaded off into disregard for—or plain violation of—the law of the land. Despite the commission's own mealymouthed language, this is the most damning finding.

In August 1986 the Arms Export Control Act was amended to prohibit arms sales to countries that the State Department identified as supporters of terrorism. Iran was on the list. The White House sold arms to Iran in October 1986.

Under the Arms Export Control Act, a president wishing to transfer arms to *any* country, terrorist or not, must meet a series of requirements to ensure, first, that countries receiving U.S. weapons don't resell them and, second, that Congress is notified in advance of any transactions involving weapons worth more than $14 million. In the case of Iranamok, Reagan ignored the first requirement. True, the Arms Export law says he could have waived it on grounds of national security, but such a waiver requires prior congressional notification. Needless to say, Reagan ignored that, too.

Much has been made of whether or not Reagan approved an arms transfer to Iran via Israel in August 1985. After saying he did, then saying he didn't, Reagan now says he can't remember. But even if the president *did* give some kind of "oral" approval, that vague gesture probably didn't satisfy the National Security Act, which requires a formal intelligence finding to authorize such covert activity, as well as congressional notification—if not in advance, then at least in "a timely manner."

On January 17, 1986, Reagan finally did sign a presidential intelligence finding authorizing the arms-for-hostages covert action, and giving the United States legal authority to sell arms directly to Iran. Actually, Reagan never studied the finding himself, and didn't even sign it with his own hand. Rather, he listened as national security adviser John Poindexter described the document to him; then he approved it. Poindexter scribbled the president's initials—"per JMP"—at the bottom.

The finding called for a delay in notifying Congress, apparently until the hostages were safely in U.S. hands. The administration maintains that postponing notification was justified by a desire to avoid a congressional leak that might jeopardize the deal, and was therefore allowed by the law's "timely manner" provisions. But as the Tower Commission points out, this rationalization lost whatever force it might have had after the Iranians failed to release the hostages as promised. In the event, the White House *never* informed Congress until the story became public by other means.

Obviously fear of leaks cannot be a permanent justification for not informing Congress of intelligence operations, or the law's requirement that Congress be informed would be meaningless. Implicit in the law is a decision that the benefit of democratic review is worth the risk of leaks. The remarkable stupidity of this very operation illustrates the law's wisdom in allowing a congressional kibitzer or two to oversee intelligence operations. Some-

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one might have said, "Are you crazy?"

From late 1984 to mid-1986, Congress prohibited U.S. government support for the *contras*. Although the prohibition was phrased in terms of financial expenditures—as are many legal prohibitions—the purpose was clear. The Tower report offers fewer details about Oliver North's "private" network to funnel military aid to the Nicaraguan *contras* than it does about the Iran project. Nevertheless, the report overwhelmingly confirms that North—with the knowledge of his superiors on the NSC, and more than likely with the knowledge and cooperation of other officials—violated the law by shipping military aid to the *contras*. In fact, he put together a vast network, called "Project Democracy," of shell corporations, ships, and bank accounts dedicated to getting arms and ammunition to the *contras*. Siphoned-off money from the arms sales to Iran probably wound up in one of Project Democracy's Swiss bank accounts.

The supposedly private *contra* aid network and the Iran project were linked in other ways, too. Indeed, at one crucial juncture, the Iran deal could not have gone forward if the outlaw *contra* network hadn't been in existence. On November 22, 1985, North suddenly found himself without the aircraft he needed to deliver HAWK missiles to Iran. His pal retired Gen. Richard Secord filled the gap, offering the services of an aircraft he had planned to use for a supply drop to the *contras*. "Will meet w/Calero tonite to advise that the ammo will be several days late in coming," North wrote.

It's against the law to lie to Congress, whether or not you're under oath. On several occasions in 1985, former national security adviser Robert McFarlane responded to inquiries from House members with carefully hedged but basically false denials of North's role in the *contra* network, which he was fully aware of. North himself did the same thing in testimony to the House Intelligence Committee in August 1986—a deception that earned him a "Well Done" from McFarlane's successor, John Poindexter.

Then there's obstruction of justice. North was interviewed last November by Attorney General Ed Meese during the White House's belated attempts to put together a coherent story about the Iran dealings. After talking to Meese, North reportedly shredded documents and doctored memos, in what looks transparently like an effort to keep evidence of his wrongdoing, and that of others, away from investigators.

FINALLY, the Tower report leaves unresolved serious questions about the conduct of high officials other than those on the NSC staff. One is former CIA chief William Casey, whose name crops up in connection with North's secret *contra* operation. For example, in a May 1986 memo Poindexter warned North to be more discreet, in a way that suggests North had been in the habit of talking freely to Casey about his activities in Central America: "From now on, I don't want you to talk to anybody else, including Casey, except me about any of your operational roles." The report barely touches on the possible role that may have been played by Vice President Bush and his staff in the *contra* network. Key members of that staff apparently had contact with the supervisors of covert *contra* resupply flights out of El Salvador's Ilopango air base. Another official with a lot of explaining to do is Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams. He had frequent discussions with North about *contra*-related matters, but has nevertheless denied, both in the Tower report and in past congressional testimony, that he knew about North's illegal network.

We're not baying for blood. Perhaps no one in the administration will ever be prosecuted for Iranamok. None of the relevant arms export or anti-*contra* aid laws contain specific criminal penalties. Even the issue of obstruction of justice is not as clear-cut as it might seem, since North could argue he didn't know he was, or soon would be, under criminal investigation. But the issue of the president's duty to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed" is different from the issue of specific indictability. If no one is ever convicted in connection with Iranamok, that will be heralded in some quarters as "proof" that there was "no wrongdoing." But it will be no such thing. The record already assembled—even before key players such as North, Secord, and Poindexter have told their stories—demonstrates a pattern of official disregard for the law and the truth. And that's a matter of basic character, not "management style."

NOTEBOOK

□ WHOSE JEWS? Jews who manage to get out of the Soviet Union have the choice of going to Israel or the United States, and about 80 percent choose the United States. With the prospect that more Soviet Jews soon will be allowed to exit, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir has asked Secretary of State George Shultz to make that choice harder by denying Soviet Jews special refugee status. Leading American Jewish groups all oppose this Israeli request. Although, at TNR, we sympathize with anyone's desire to live in the United States and have long favored vastly increased immigration quotas (or perhaps no quotas at all), we tend to side with Shamir on this one. The special moral claim of Soviet Jews, as opposed to all others who might wish to leave the Communist state, is their wish to be reunited with their people in the promised land. The fact that most actually come to America undermines that moral claim, and should undermine the pressure that gets them out. There are, after all, many millions in the Soviet prison house of nations for whom in these circumstances the United States would also be their chosen promised land. But no one agitates to let the Kremlin's persecuted Lithuanians and Kazakhs, Baptists, and Jehovah's Witnesses go. Their claim for admission to our country is not less than that of Russia's Jews. Meanwhile, desperate would-be refugees and immigrants from many countries are turned away from America every year. Few of them have the

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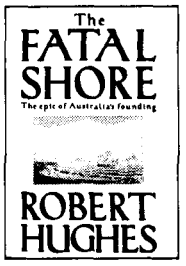

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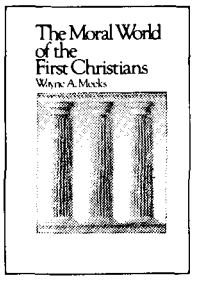

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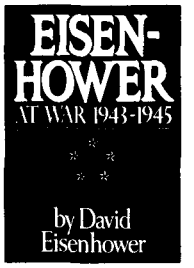

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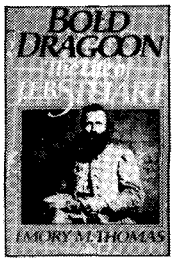

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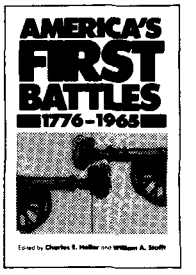

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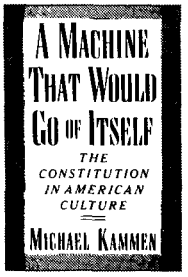

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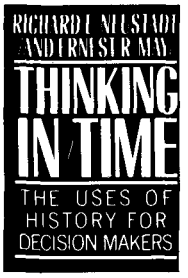

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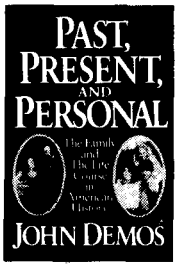

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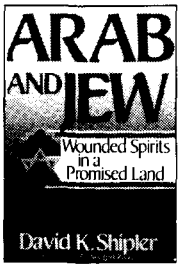

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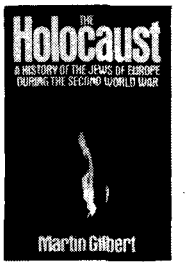

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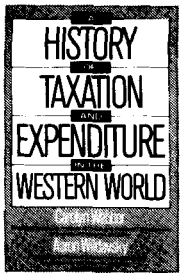

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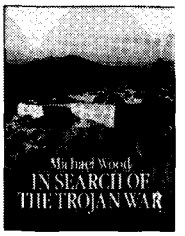

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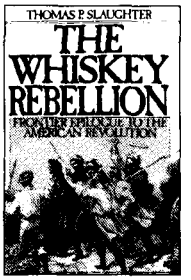

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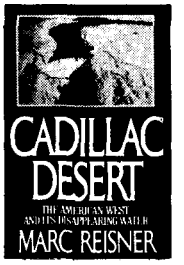

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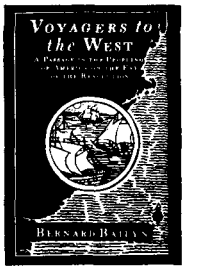

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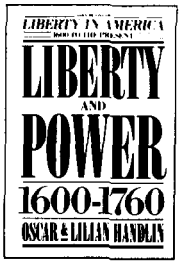

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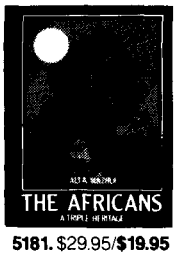

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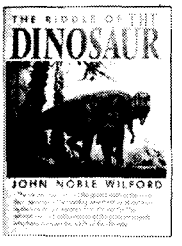

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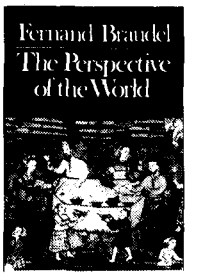

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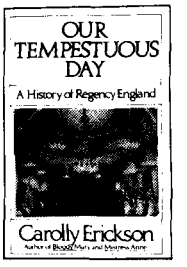

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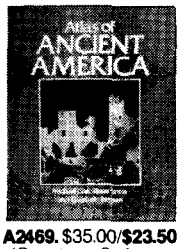

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option of living in a free, democratic, relatively prosperous nation such as Israel. It's hard to see why Jews who do have that option should get special treatment. It's time, then, that the special pleading on their behalf should stop too.

□ QUESTION TIME: As Mickey Kaus points out on page 15, Iranamok illustrates once again the defect of our political system, compared with a parliamentary system: that there is no way to resolve a crisis through an orderly change of government. A related defect is the chief executive's ability to avoid all unscripted public exposure. As our system has evolved, the nearest equivalent to parliamentary "question time" is the presidential press conference. It's not ideal (who elected journalists?), but it's all we've got. Yet it's been almost four months—four momentous political months—since President Reagan has deigned to answer public questions. If he wants to restore confidence—in his respect for democratic process, as well as in his own mental condition—this is an essential step.

□ ACTIVIST JUDGES: Oliver North has asked a federal judge to invalidate the special prosecutor's investigation of Iranamok. His lawyers argue that the post-Watergate law providing for judicially appointed "independent counsels" to prosecute administration misbehavior violates the constitutional "separation of powers." Close Reagan adviser Michael Deaver has derailed his own scheduled indictment for illegal influence peddling with the same argument. The infuriating ironies here begin with the fact that Deaver himself demanded a special prosecutor in his case. Then there's the notion of Ollie North as a brooder on the subtleties of constitutional doctrine. But there's more. This "separation of powers" argument is a special pet of the Reagan administration and the Burger-Rehnquist Supreme Court. It was used last year to cripple the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget law. Reaganites dream of applying it to wipe out all independent federal regulatory agencies, such as the Federal Trade Commission. It is, in short, a classic example of conservative judicial activism: using fanciful interpretations of broad con-

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
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3.	LENDING AN ARM	—	1
4.	BETTER LATEX THAN NEVER	8	10
5.	RATE OF INTEREST	—	1
6.	PROTECTIVE DEVICES	5	4
7.	DOLE ON A ROLL	3	3
8.	FAWNED OVER	—	1
9.	YES, WE HAVE BANANAS	—	—
10.	SPOT NEWS	—	1

1. UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Howard Baker. How many people really cared who the chief of staff was, as long as he kept his nose clean? Baker's entry into Washington is like a Roman triumph. Amid all the "euphoric" noise about his political talents, the real question remains perfectly audible: How good is he as a puppeteer?

2. WHEN THE CHEERING STOPPED

Iranamok. Despite its discreet "management style" language, the Tower Commission report has altered public comment about Reagan. The "medical question" (senility, weariness) is openly discussed, and references to Wilson's tragic second term are common. A broad-based desire to see Reagan recoup is apparent, but post-Tower Beltway gossip has him out, for health reasons, by summer.

3. LENDING AN ARM

Arms control. The subtext of the Soviets' arms proposal is bilateral *political* survival. Reagan needs a deal. But Gorbachev too is now portrayed as embattled, needing a deal to stave off hard-liners. And don't forget ZC's March 9 prediction that *glasnost* will wrench the Western alliance. It's starting with Europe's schizophrenic reaction to the idea of removing American nukes from their soil.

4. BETTER LATEX THAN NEVER

AIDS. The AIDS phenomenon is burrowing deep into the culture. We now have such concepts as (1) "AIDS apartheid," a reaction to the snowballing quarantine mentality; and (2) "the post-AIDS generation"—an effort to describe an entire worldview of those persons coming of age in an atmosphere of sexual fear.

5. RATE OF INTEREST

Foreign debt. Suspension of interest payments by Brazil and Ecuador, and ominous words on the subject from Argentina and Mexico, remain buried on the financial pages. However, sky-is-falling page-one coverage can be forecast if the story develops at all. It's a world crisis too complicated to play out on "Good Morning America." But stay tuned.

6. PROTECTIVE DEVICES

Competitiveness. The din on behalf of protective trade legislation has grown, though the debate remains for now a struggle for emotions. Current TV campaigns on the subject, for example, are notable for their complete lack of facts.

7. DOLE ON A ROLL

1988. Baker's withdrawal supposedly helps Dole, though it also frees up moderates for Bush. A major question, however, is what Bush's public profile will be like in the wake of Iranamok. Meanwhile, give Dole credit for selling himself as both moderate and conservative, and threatening to pull away early.

8. FAWNED OVER

Fawn Hall. Hey, whatever happened to Fawn whatsername? She made Fleet Street happy for 15 minutes, and will get another shot in front of the committees. After that, look for her on the cover of the inevitable *The Women of Iranamok* paperback.

9. YES, WE HAVE BANANAS

Health. Smoking and AIDS are not the only American health obsessions. The latest revisions in the Consumer Price Index reveal numerous diet shifts in the last decade. Red meat's decline is well-known, as is distilled alcohol's. But also declining are flour-based foods and sweets in general. Surprise jump: a big increase in banana consumption.

10. SPOT NEWS

Advertising. Americans' favorite TV ads of 1986 include Coke's Max Headroom, Joey Isuzu, and dancing claymation raisins—all novelty ads. What stands out is the absence from the list of the many campaigns exploiting patriotism. Either the audience always found them a turn-off, or they do now. Coke's abandonment of its "Red, White, and You" campaign in favor of Headroom is a sign of the future.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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stitutional provisions to overrule the workings of democracy. Pursue this line of argument if you wish, fellas, but let's hear no more about liberals letting criminals off on technicalities.

□ PRESIDENT BAKER: Howard Baker made a classic Washington insider's mistake when he quit as Senate majority leader in 1984 to run for president: he thought he was beloved in America just because he was beloved in Washington. Then he quickly sank from sight. Now he gets to be president anyway, or at least co-president with Mrs. Reagan, and the White House gets some blessed relief from bad publicity. (Baker was appointed chief of staff on the day after the release of the Tower report, rather than giving Don Regan a decent interval as promised, in order to give the weekend political talk shows something else—something nice—to talk about. It worked.) Right-wingers who fear that Baker will lead the White House toward a more moderate agenda misread the man, we think. He is no principled moderate, if such an animal exists. Baker's genius has been to turn a likable personality and a lack of any serious political principles into a reputation for statesmanship and moderation. His specialty in the Senate was playing Hamlet—ostentatiously refusing to decide whether or not to support the Panama Canal treaty or SALT II, and getting an ever more inflated reputation for "thoughtfulness" the longer he waited to see which way the wind was blowing. We doubt the Art of the Waffle will play as well at the White House.

□ EVELYN WOOD TIME: The day after the Tower Commission report was released, ABC News soberly reported the results of a national opinion poll, conducted the previous afternoon, in which 60-some percent of the population said the report had not changed their overall opinion of President Reagan. That's fine, but we're wondering about the other 30-odd percent. The Tower Commission report is 280 pages long, most of them dense with chronology, quotation, and exotic foreign names, yet a third of the population said it had changed their views within hours of its release in Washington. President Reagan said he was going to "read and digest" the report before commenting, which you can believe if you wish. You can also believe, if you like, that all the Washington pundits who discussed the report's meaning and significance—some of them within minutes of its release—had taken a similar precaution.

□ GETTING AND SPENDING: For the first time since 1978, the Labor Department has revised the formula for calculating the Consumer Price Index—the most popular measure of inflation. The CPI is supposed to reflect what an average family spends its money on, but this changes over time. Two changes in the latest revision are especially interesting. First, services—as opposed to physical goods—now account for over half of all consumer spending. The shift from goods to services on the production side of the American economy is often presented as evidence of economic decay. What the new CPI demonstrates is that America is producing more services because services are what Americans want to consume. And this is a sign of prosperity, not decline. As you get richer, you buy fewer groceries and eat more meals in restaurants. You spend a smaller fraction of your income on clothing and more on opera tickets. That's healthy. The second noticeable change is not so healthy: the cost of housing has jumped from 38 percent of the weighted index to 43 percent, most of that reflecting a one-third jump in the share of income devoted to home ownership. It would be hard to argue that America is dramatically better housed than it was in 1978. These figures demonstrate that the housing traumas of young working couples (yes, even the despised yuppies) are genuine.

□ HOSTAGES TO FORTUNE: "Reagan has reasserted the force of individual leadership. . . . Leadership is a mysterious business, of course, but Reagan seems to derive his strength from the fact that he does exactly what he says he will do. . . . Reagan goes directly into the American bloodstream, the American consciousness. . . . Reagan's personal authenticity is one of his greatest strengths, one reason why people tend to trust him. . . . Better, perhaps, to deal with a man one trusts than to be fooled and manipulated for the best of ends. . . . Reagan has turned out like nothing that his critics foretold, not the amiable dunce nor the dim-witted geriatric that they joked about, receding into befuddled twilight. . . . Reagan's success results in part from his impressive basic consistency. . . . Reagan's reassertion of presidential leadership will undoubtedly be regarded as one of his most important contributions to the presidency. . . ." Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. —*Time* magazine cover story, July 7, 1986.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

PRESIDENT NANCY

MARLIN FITZWATER, the chief White House spokesman, informed reporters on February 13 that they would no longer be allowed to shout questions at President Reagan during "photo opportunities." And, he added, he wasn't going to rely on voluntary compliance. Since photo events were practically the only access reporters had to Reagan since the Iran scandal broke, he knew this wouldn't work. So photo opportunities were dropped from the president's schedule altogether (though the White House's own photographers continued to take and release decorous pictures of presidential meetings). Naturally, the White House press mob protested furiously. "He'll answer questions when he's ready and when the doctors say there are no restrictions on his activities," Fitzwater explained. Pressed, he admitted it wasn't the doctors who were imposing restrictions on reporters' questions. "It's our decision on the coverage of these events," he said. "It's arbitrary."

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It sure was, but Fitzwater didn't have anything to do with it. Nor did Donald T. Regan, the now-deposed chief of the White House staff. Fitzwater and Regan merely acceded to orders from First Lady Nancy Reagan, who didn't want her husband seen ducking questions about Iranamok or, worse, fumbling his way through attempts to answer them.

Nancy's gag rule was not absolute. Five days later, she instructed Fitzwater to permit reporters and photographers to drop by briefly during an Oval Office chat between Reagan and Israeli premier Yitzhak Shamir. Nancy had a scheme. After months of cajolery, she finally had persuaded the president to cut Regan loose, only she couldn't get him to tell Regan the news. A photo op would suffice. Reporters could be expected to play their part at the session, and they did, asking if Regan would stay on. The president spoke deliberately. "It's up to him," Reagan said, sounding as if he expected Regan's exit soon.

THIS CLEVER GAMBIT, one of many intrusions by Nancy Reagan into White House business in recent months, worked marvelously. A senior official hired by Regan watched a TV tape of the Reagan remark over and over. "Body language matters with Reagan," the official said. "It was clear he was ready for Regan to leave. It was unmistakable." Even Regan understood and began planning an orderly exit. But did the president have the foggiest idea that he'd been set up by his wife? Not so you could tell. He was henpecked, manipulated, and oblivious.

Nancy's eagerness to meddle, with or without her husband's consent or knowledge, has made her an enormous influence in Washington. She has her own coterie of political advisers (Stuart Spencer, Michael Deaver, Richard Wirthlin) and favored journalists (George Will, Chris Wallace). She has her own agenda (another summit or two, friendly faces in senior White House positions). But don't jump to the conclusion that she's like Edith Wilson, who ran the White House after husband Woodrow's stroke in 1919. Nancy Reagan has intermittent episodes of activism, and they usually come when her husband is in political trouble. Sometimes she's helpful. After Reagan's disastrous first debate with Walter Mondale in 1984, she convinced his strategists not to point out the mistakes he'd made. Build him up, boost his ego, tell him all the good things he did, she said. It worked.

Her meddling isn't working anymore. She did succeed in drumming Regan out of the White House to the acclaim of the political community. But not without further damaging her husband's doddering presidency. Reagan's ability to get a grip on his job and lead the country has been thrown into doubt by the Iran scandal. These doubts were heightened by the Tower Commission report. Nancy's intervention only deepens the suspicion that he's lost control. There's an inverse relationship at work here. To the extent that Nancy is running the White House—and she, not Reagan or Regan, has been the chief honcho for the last four months—the president isn't. Once the public got wind of this, Reagan's popularity sank.

In the current atmosphere, the last thing Reagan needed was a power struggle between his wife and his top aide in which he was all but irrelevant. The image is destructive: a cunning queen fighting with a overbearing prime minister for the power that the out-to-lunch king can't wield. But it's not just a matter of image. If it were, the road to recovery would be paved with media events and Deaveresque policy touches. The truth is that Reagan really has lost control since the scandal—of his schedule, of hiring and firing, of his agenda. Getting it back won't be easy, particularly with everyone in the administration looking to Nancy for signals.

NANCY'S FEUD with Regan goes back to 1985. She wasn't happy with the job swap that sent James Baker to Treasury and Regan to the White House. Baker is a skilled politician who knew that buttering up Congress and leaking to the press were necessary but not sufficient to being a successful chief of staff. Courting Nancy was also required, and he did. Regan is no politician at all. He failed to win any friends in Congress or the press. (His one attempt at leaking was a crude suggestion that Robert McFarlane, then the president's national security adviser, was womanizing.) Worse, he thought it enough to please the president and ignore Nancy. It wasn't.

Contrary to press accounts, Regan's penchant for hanging up the phone on Nancy isn't a recent development. After Reagan's surgery for colon cancer in August 1985, Regan and Nancy squabbled over who would set the president's schedule. Regan went along with her wishes that no one but she, Regan, and Vice President George Bush be allowed to visit Reagan at Bethesda Naval Hospital after the operation. Thus McFarlane was kept away. Regan also knuckled under to Nancy by canceling a helicopter he'd lined up to fly him from the White House to the hospital. She was mad about this because she traveled by motorcade. When the president got back to the White House, Nancy sought to continue as his scheduler. At one point, Regan said, "That's my turf." She disagreed and peppered him with phone calls. To end one contentious call, he hung up on her.

A longer battle occurred after Iranamok broke in early November. She wanted the president to avoid public appearances and stay out of the path of reporters, especially after his unimpressive performance in a nationally televised press conference on November 19. Soon Regan was pressing for more activity to show that Reagan wasn't hiding, that the scandal hadn't unsettled him. The less he shows his face, the chief of staff argued, the more embattled he looks. Even cheap media events help. On Christmas Eve, Regan wanted the president to visit an aircraft carrier in Newport News, Virginia, or eat dinner at the White House or Camp David with representatives of the five military services. Nancy nixed those. Instead, Reagan made a few phone calls to military personnel.

After Reagan's prostate operation on January 5, Nancy was more adamant still about keeping the president under wraps. She let him out for the State of the Union address on January 27, though she thought the speech text was inadequate and blamed Regan for that. Actually, it was Reagan himself who summoned speechwriter Ken Khachigian to

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Camp David the weekend before to work over the text. Following the speech, she again blocked most of Regan's efforts to put Reagan in public. And she was dead set against another presidential press conference before mid-March. Regan argued for one shortly after the release of the Tower Commission report. This disagreement led to her hanging up the phone with this closing line: "Well, have your damned press conference." Nancy also had a hand in the selection of John Koehler, the fellow with the Nazi Youth past, as White House communications director. The first Regan heard of him was from Nancy, and he blamed her for promoting the Koehler appointment.

Nancy had the last laugh. On the morning of Friday, February 27, Fitzwater went to the Oval Office to ask Reagan how he should handle questions about Regan at the noon press briefing. The president said he and Regan would be meeting on Monday, March 2, to discuss the chief of staff's future. That's what Fitzwater should say. Of course, the plan was for Regan to tell the president he'd be leaving, ask that his secretaries be kept on at the White House, and then have his resignation announced. At the least, this would create an interval of a few days between the release of the Tower Commission report, which criticized Regan harshly, and his departure. But that was Reagan's plan. Nancy wanted Regan out pronto. When Howard Baker accepted the job as chief of staff that Friday, Nancy's allies leaked word immediately, forcing a public announcement. Regan was caught by surprise. But no more than the president.

FRED BARNES

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

GENE OF THE WEEK

WOULD YOU want to be told, at the age of 20, that your body is likely to undergo severe mental and physical deterioration when you reach your early 50s? Should a fetus be aborted if there is a good chance it will be born to lead a normal, productive life—and then develop Alzheimer's disease at age 60 or 70? These are not hypothetical questions. They are choices that medicine can offer now or will be able to offer soon.

Science reporters seem to have joined a gene-of-the-week club. Suddenly, several laboratories have announced the discovery of genes responsible for various inherited diseases. The list of those for which genes have been located includes Alzheimer's, Huntington's, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, manic depression, and polycystic kidney. At last our understanding of the molecules that control heredity appears to be leading to an alleviation of human illness. This promise has existed ever since Watson and Crick described the structure of DNA in 1953, but it has been fulfilled much more slowly than many scientists predicted.

Molecular biology indeed will pay off. The family doctor will be able to cure or prevent many awful genetic diseases. But we don't get all the benefits at once. In the first stage, physicians and scientists are able to identify those at risk for the illness but are not able to cure it. We are still in that stage for every disease for which a gene has been located, and this means we are faced with serious ethical dilemmas.

MOST RECENTLY it was announced that a gene responsible for manic depression had been located. This study is notable not only for its contribution to the understanding of genetic disease but also because it turns much of psychiatry upside down. The nature-nurture debate about the origin of mental illness will continue. But there is no longer any question that at least some kinds of mental illness—indeed, one of the most common types—can be caused by specific physical changes. The research proved that manic-depressive illness, just like brown eyes, can be passed on from parent to child by a dominant gene.

The study was carried out in the Old Order Amish community of southeastern Pennsylvania. This closed community, which adheres strictly to tradition, suffers no more manic depression than any other group of Americans. But the Amish's large, extended families and well-understood genealogy make genetic studies much simpler.

Eventually the discovery of this gene will lead to an understanding of the precise cause of manic depression and probably to better ways to treat it. But now, because of what researchers learned by studying Amish families, they can test blood from an Amish child of any age and determine whether he or she is likely to develop manic depression as an adult. Do they want to do that?

"I'm very anxious not to walk up to a ten-year-old child and say, 'Fifteen years from now there is a high probability you will have a formidable psychiatric illness,' and leave that child with a cloud over his head for a significant part of his life," says Dr. David Housman of MIT, who headed the manic-depression study. But for the sake of research, there are reasons Housman and his colleagues might want to test Amish children for predisposition to the illness.

Their studies found that people who inherit the gene have about a 60 percent chance of developing the illness as adults. It would be useful to know what factors (upbringing perhaps?) determine who gets the illness and who does not. It would be important to learn what interventions—drugs, psychotherapy, or others—would lower the percentage of those with the gene who get the illness. The dilemma is obvious and tough.

Those for whom memories of high school genetics are dimming might want to be reminded that everything we are is determined by the information on our set of chromosomes, half from each parent, which we carry in every cell in the body. The chromosomes are made up of the chemical DNA. Each section of DNA on the chromosome that has a specific function is called a gene. Usually a gene directs the

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production of a particular protein.

Except for one of the diseases (Duchene's, the most common form of muscular dystrophy), the scientists have not yet isolated the actual gene causing the problem. They have found "markers"—that is, genes located near the faulty gene—so that in studies of families they can find the approximate location of the gene that causes the disease. (Contrary to what one might think, it is more difficult to locate the faulty gene itself than the markers.) With that information the scientists can identify carriers of the gene in families where the disease occurs. All they need are blood samples from at least two other family members, one known to be a carrier of the gene, one known not to be.

Most of that sort of testing has been available for families stricken by Huntington's disease, a severe mental and physical deterioration that occurs in later life and is best known as the condition that destroyed Woody Guthrie. Some younger people in the families where Huntington's occurs have elected to be tested. If they have the gene, they might decide not to marry or have children, so that the gene is not passed on. But others have recoiled in horror from the test. What are they supposed to do for the rest of their lives, knowing what lies ahead? If word of the test result leaks out, what are their chances of decent career opportunities, not to mention life or health insurance?

The next step in the research, after using the "markers" to locate the disease gene, is to isolate the gene itself, the specific piece of DNA that is responsible for the disease. Although so far this has been accomplished only for muscular dystrophy, it is highly likely that scientists will succeed within the next few years in isolating all or most of the genes that have been located. Once a gene has been isolated, the DNA chemists can develop a "probe," a test that can determine whether someone is a carrier of the gene.

The most important use of a probe would be as a means of detecting the defective gene in the tiny amounts of chromosomal material that are isolated from the fetus during an amniocentesis. Then the parents can decide whether or not to have an abortion. Today, analysis after amniocentesis only detects diseases such as Down's syndrome, which produce gross chromosomal abnormalities. But several laboratories are working to develop the prenatal test for muscular dystrophy. Very soon amniocentesis will reveal whether the child will develop any of a long list of genetic diseases during its lifetime.

THE RECENT discovery of a gene that causes Alzheimer's disease was the most important finding about that terrible and widespread condition. As a result, it is quite likely that fetuses might soon be tested for susceptibility. Anti-abortion groups already oppose amniocentesis to check for conditions such as Down's syndrome. Their opposition can only intensify. "People have gotten used to the idea that we would terminate a life that would only last for two or three years," says Dr. Nancy Wexler of Columbia University, who heads the Hereditary Disease Foundation. "The notion that we would stop a life that would be normal for many years raises astounding difficulties."

Eventually the discovery of disease-causing genes, and then their isolation, should tell molecular biologists exactly how these genes work. And this in turn should lead to better treatment, prevention, and cures. But that is further off. Right now the biologists are discovering the genes at a rapid pace. Dr. Wexler estimates that 20 to 25 more will be found in the next year.

Grant applications and medical reporting often describe "breakthroughs just around the corner." But we can't wait even that long to confront the moral dilemmas that molecular biology is presenting today.

ROBERT BAZELL

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Drugs vs. grandchildren.

POPULARITY CONTEST

A STUDY BY the advertising agency D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles finds that drugs are four times as popular as grandchildren as a source of pleasure or satisfaction to the average American. The report, "Fears and Fantasies of the American Consumer," sampled the opinions of 752 males and 798 females from all across the country. The respondents were grouped together in consumer panels said to be "representative of U.S. households as a whole in terms of critical demographic factors: gender, marital status; geographic region; age; income, market size."

It is thus all the more alarming that when asked to identify their primary sources of pleasure or satisfaction, the respondents were 17 times more likely to identify their clothes than their grandchildren, and liked food 41 times as much. Hobbies were 56 times more popular than grandchildren, drinking 15 times. Only pets, the theater, and movies were less popular as a source of pleasure or satisfaction.

The study, which did not explain why grandchildren had fallen on such hard times, had some other interesting findings. It determined that three percent of the American public would like a clone to drive their cars and manage their money, that only one man in a hundred wants to be a columnist offering advice to the lovelorn, that just two percent of the women in this country dream of being a rabbi, and that by an overwhelming majority, Americans do not want to be mistaken for either Barbara Mandrell or Charles Bronson.

It also found that: the same number of American men would like to be poets as to be dog breeders; most Americans blame criminals for crime; six percent of American males would like to be lumberjacks. But not a single female polled expressed any such inclination. "Just taking it easy" is 54 times as popular as grandchildren when it comes to

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feeling good about oneself, and daydreaming about 27 times as popular. Even "thinking of past accomplishments" is 22 times as popular as the little tykes.

Last year the Institute of Behavioral Sciences at the University of Colorado published a study revealing that women who tell prospective employers that their graduate theses dealt with sex discrimination in the workplace are less likely to get job interviews than women who do not. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund study (conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly & White) established that "there is a clear relationship between regular attendance at religious services and giving to religious charities." Pivotal as these studies are, they are dwarfed in importance by the DMB&B survey, one of whose most disturbing findings is that children are 53 times as popular as grandchildren as a source of pleasure or satisfaction to the average American. A society that loves its clothes 17 times as much as its grandchildren should certainly be better dressed than this one.

JOE QUEENAN

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A constitutional eject button.

NO CONFIDENCE

OMNIVOROUS Glominoid Corporation has made a disastrous business move. The chairman of the company, who made the decision, calls in an expensive management consultant to tell him what went wrong. But the consultant has a problem. The Glominoid chairman, after all, is paying his firm's six-figure consulting fee, and he wants repeat business. He is understandably reluctant to go to the embattled CEO and say, "After extensive study, Mr. Chairman, I've concluded the problem is you." Instead, after extensive study, the consultant comes back and says the "process" didn't work because the chairman's staff failed to adapt to his "management style." The consultant is happy. He gets his fee. The CEO is happy. He fires his assistant.

Washington has just gone through a similar exercise. Except that when the Tower Commission declined to blame Ronald Reagan's own incompetence, the reason wasn't venal. It was constitutional. No constructive purpose would be served by criticizing the president too harshly—we're stuck with him for the next two years.

So we blame others for not "compensating" for his manifest inadequacies. We blame Don Regan for failing to expose Reagan to conflicting viewpoints, even though when Reagan was exposed to conflicting viewpoints he made the same dumb choice anyway. (Well, then they should have "pounded the table" until he changed his mind!) We are told the "policy implications" should have been spelled out to the president in reports and memos. As if he'd have read them. We are told that Reagan must become more "involved." Who really wants Reagan involved? Reagan's the problem, not the solution.

When the chairman of a business screws up this badly, he can be fired by the board of directors. And if the board won't fire an incompetent executive, there's always the possibility of a hostile takeover attempt. But when the president reveals himself to have been a fool, there is nothing that can be done, unless we stretch the meaning of "high crimes and misdemeanors" beyond all precedent.

IF THE United States were a parliamentary democracy, the Reagan government would have already collapsed in a "no confidence" vote. Reagan might have stepped down as leader of his party, or he might have been deposed and a fresh face substituted. If not, new elections would have been held, and he might have lost to the Democrats. Either way, we'd have a new government, with a new mandate, run by new people who understood Reagan's mistakes (something he will never do, whatever apology he might make). We could thank and honor Reagan for his six years and move on, instead of spending the next two trying to coax a proud, recalcitrant old man into suddenly becoming a different person as he struggles to serve out his term.

Why shouldn't we have a "no confidence" mechanism to get us out of this sort of jam? There are two standard objections. One is that America is ill-suited to a full-fledged parliamentary system, where the chief executive is elected indirectly by the legislature, and where small parties proliferate more easily. Tiny Britain may get by with two or three parties, but in sprawling America there might be ten—Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition Party and Jesse Helms's New Right Party, not to mention the American Agricultural 100 Percent Parity Party—each hoping to wind up with the balance of power and a disproportionate influence.

Second is the Lincoln problem. If we'd had a "no confidence" mechanism in the 1860s, the argument goes, one of our greatest presidents would have been removed during the depths of his unpopularity in the middle of the Civil War, and either the nation would have been split or the war would have been even bloodier and more vindictive. More generally, the constant threat of congressional coups would rob other farsighted presidents of the ability to do things (e.g., end farm subsidies, tighten the money supply) that might be painful in the short run but worth it in the long run.

Nobody wants to be like Italy, whose government has just collapsed for the 45th time since World War II. But couldn't we design a "no confidence" mechanism without a hair trigger, one that would save a Lincoln, but not a Reagan or a Nixon, and that wouldn't require a parliamentary system riddled with splinter parties?

It doesn't seem impossible. The key is an idea known as the "team ticket," requiring that every four years members

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of Congress run with the presidential candidates of their party as an unsplittable slate. You'd have to vote for the whole team or for another party's team. Splinter parties would be discouraged, since they would have no chance to elect a president. More important, this reform would virtually ensure that a president came into office backed by a majority in the House.

If we then allowed the House, by a two-thirds vote, to declare "no confidence" in a president, would that turn us into Italy? Remember, the president would have to lose 2-to-1 in a chamber in which his party would have started with a majority. And members of Congress would think twice before taking this drastic step because they too would have to run again, on the "team" with the presidential candidates in the new election.

The idea is that politicians, their minds thus concentrated, would distinguish between attempts to gain political advantage by refighting the previous election every time the president's popularity dips, and attempts to save the republic from a president who is genuinely unable to govern. Lincoln was not wildly popular in 1863, and he was the target of intrigue from all sides, but it seems doubtful that Congress, controlled by his party, would have put itself up for grabs in the middle of a war. Closer to home, Reagan would not have been toppled during the painful-but-necessary recession of 1982-83. But today?

Maybe Congress would boot out Lincoln and save Reagan, the worst of both worlds. There might be other glitches—special election campaigns would have to be (gasp) shorter, for example. But perhaps the mechanism could be perfected by some of the political mavens who are now breathlessly advising Reagan on how to "salvage his presidency." Let's have a symposium. I'll bring the coffee, you get us a grant.

MICKEY KAUS

Kemp's plan to tax the middle class.

RICH MAN'S POPULIST

FOR YEARS Representative Jack Kemp has enjoyed an undeserved reputation as a tax reformer. Although his populist rhetoric has made the news stories, the details of his tax positions have gone almost completely unreported. As a result, Kemp frequently is linked with real tax reformers such as Senator Bill Bradley—despite the polar differences between their positions. But recently Kemp has begun to drop his pose as defender of the common man. Speaking to Republican audiences out on the presidential campaign trail, Kemp is explicitly calling for giant tax increases on middle- and lower-income families, coupled with equally huge tax cuts for the very rich.

On January 19, 1987, Kemp told the New Hampshire Federation of Republican Women that he'd like to "get rid of that 28 percent rate" in the new federal tax law "and have just one rate at 18 or 20 percent." Since at least a 20 percent rate would be required to avoid revenue losses, Kemp's plan means increasing the bottom tax rate by one-third, from 15 percent to 20 percent, and cutting the top rates (which actually will range from 28 percent to 33 percent in 1988) to 20 percent. That amounts to a 33 percent tax hike for most Americans, and a reduction for the richest people by as much as 30 percent—on top of their already scheduled 1988 tax cuts. All told, Kemp seeks a $45 billion-a-year tax increase for families earning less than $65,000, and a corresponding tax cut for those earning more.

KEMP'S PROPOSAL finds its almost perfect counterpoint in the tax freeze suggested by Speaker of the House Jim Wright. Wright wants to fix the top income tax rate at its 1987 level of 38.5 percent, and avert as much as $25 billion a year in further tax cuts for the rich scheduled to take place next year. Despite the big revenue impact, Wright's tax freeze doesn't start to bite until a couple's income exceeds $150,000 (or perhaps $200,000; the exact plan has not been finalized). That's precisely the opposite of the higher taxes that Kemp craves for everyone who earns less than $65,000.

Kemp has been a master at putting his finger on exactly what's wrong with the tax system—and then quietly proposing to make things worse. Now he is saying, "Mr. and Mrs. Middle America, I want to raise your taxes." At least he is talking straight this time around.

Take, for example, his pronouncements about corporate taxation during last year's tax reform debate. "There is no reason conservatives should support tax breaks and subsidies for corporations," he said frequently. That was exactly right. The fundamental problem with the old tax system was that it was full of loopholes, allowing a high proportion of our major corporations to escape paying taxes. Those same loopholes were responsible for the boom in tax shelters for wealthy individuals, and a primary cause of the federal budget deficit.

But did Kemp propose to do anything about the corporate loophole problem? To be sure, he was the co-sponsor, with Senator Robert Kasten, of a so-called tax reform program. But despite Kemp's and Kasten's attempts to pose as tax simplifiers, their "Fair and Simple Tax" looked as though it were drafted by a committee of tax shelter promoters.

As originally introduced, the Kemp-Kasten bill included only one loophole-closing provision, a modest crackdown on tax breaks for oil and gas. But even that didn't last. After consultation with the oil lobbyists, Kemp decided to drop the oil and gas reforms, leaving him with a tax plan that attacked not a single tax shelter. As a result, the Kemp-Kasten plan was essentially nothing but a rate-reduction measure, one estimated to lose as much as $100 billion a year in revenues.

Simply cutting tax rates without regard to the federal budget deficit is nothing new for Kemp. President Rea-

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gan's 1981 tax cut program was based on the tax rate reduction bill first introduced in 1978 by Kemp and Senator William Roth. The Kemp-Roth plan was billed as an "across-the-board" reduction in taxes. But it actually was designed to shift the tax burden from the rich while raising taxes on middle- and low-income families. According to the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, as ultimately enacted, the Reagan-Kemp-Roth rate changes reduced federal taxes only for people making more than $75,000 a year. For the rest of us, the so-called tax cuts were more than outweighed by the tax increases from inflation-driven "bracket creep" and the loss in value of the standard deduction, personal exemptions, and, for low-income families, the earned-income tax credit.

Indeed, from 1979 to 1986, federal taxes on poverty-level families rose from less than two percent of income to almost 11 percent—despite enactment of Kemp's supposed "across-the-board" tax cuts. Meanwhile, the share of income paid in taxes by the wealthiest one percent of Americans fell by close to one-third.

After years of pretending one thing while doing another, Jack Kemp finally has come out of the closet with his true agenda. The American people should consider that agenda carefully as he begins an apparently serious run for the presidency.

ROBERT S. MCINTYRE

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End of the beginning in South Africa.

THE FALL OF THE FRONT

BY STEVEN MUFSON

New Brighton

A year ago Mkhuseli Jack, one of the leaders of the United Democratic Front, the leading anti-government organization in South Africa, was in such demand here among blacks and whites that he carried a beeper. In the nearby white city of Port Elizabeth, Jack strode about as though he were mayor, carrying an attaché case to meetings with white businessmen who were being strangled by a black consumer boycott. In the black townships, he was a hero. As he passed, black youths shouted, "Hey com!"—short for comrade.

When I visited Jack last April, the stature of the UDF rivaled that of the government. The Front was issuing licenses to street vendors and fixing the prices for staple commodities in black-owned stores. White businessmen such as food wholesalers and bus company owners, long since despairing of police protection, negotiated safe passage for their vehicles with the UDF. Jack declared to one cheering throng at a political funeral that "this is the moment of truth in our struggle."

Today the moment of truth appears distant. The period from July 1985 to June 1986 was a kind of Prague Spring in the black townships. That brief flowering has been crushed. It has become clear to activists that the state of emergency declared on June 12, 1986, which seemed like a temporary setback at the time, will probably be long-lasting. The high-profile, anti-apartheid politics of the past three years are now impossible, and the opposition must move on to a new phase of protest.

The South African government has mounted a full-scale assault on the UDF and its 700 affiliates nationwide, and it is winning. Since the declaration of emergency last June, the government never needed to deploy more than 10,000-15,000 troops to back up its police operations. New Brighton, which once was called a "liberated zone," is sealed off with rings of razor-sharp barbed wire. Police roadblocks monitor people entering and leaving the township. Some of the checkpoints of this "Berlin Wall"—as it has been nicknamed—are manned by the same young comrades who once hailed Jack. Mass funerals of the kind that galvanized the townships every weekend have been banned by the government; the black consumer boycott has petered out. And the UDF damaged itself among its own supporters by its inability to control political and criminal violence. As the repression mounted, the people's exhaustion made it easier for the government to dislodge the opposition.

Last August, after weeks in hiding, Mkhuseli Jack himself was arrested. He now languishes in jail, along with dozens of other UDF leaders from Port Elizabeth (only one remains at large). The regional president of the UDF is standing trial for murder in connection with a "necklace" killing. The government has detained so many political leaders in the Eastern Cape that it has been forced to ship common criminals all over the country to make room in the

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local prisons. Prison construction is the only growth industry here. Nine are currently being built.

The "street committees," designed to keep the group going during the anticipated crackdown, are now operating in only a handful of areas. Even then they lack purpose. A UDF leader hiding in Uitenhage told me that the organizations are coming up with new strategies that are still secret—perhaps because they don't yet exist. Other leaders admit that they are at a loss about what to do next. A leading UDF official said recently that South Africa might be entering a phase like that of the mid-1960s, when ruthless government repression stifled black protest for more than a decade. The next week he too was detained, though he has since been released.

THE UDF WAS founded in 1983 to oppose President P. W. Botha's new constitution providing for a tricameral Parliament, with segregated houses for whites, Indians, and Coloreds—and nothing for blacks. The Front was a coalition of hundreds of local organizations devoted not to national political issues, but local bread and butter issues such as housing and education. In the course of opposing the new constitution, the UDF put the demands of these organizations into a national context.

"Suddenly the UDF became the symbol of resistance and was seen as an alternative to the status quo," says Abdullah Omar, a lawyer and UDF leader from Cape Town. "When we talk today about the limitations of the UDF, we are talking about the UDF's limitations as it strives and competes for power." The original objective of the UDF was far narrower—to resist power, not to wield it. But political power quickly became the objective in the eyes of thousands of enthusiastic UDF supporters, especially in the black townships that ring South Africa's cities. By early 1985 the UDF found itself leading the opposition to apartheid.

Nowhere was the UDF more powerful than in the towns and cities here in the Eastern Cape, a region with a long history of opposition to the government. The earliest unrest in January 1984 started in the small rural towns of the province, where people protested against rent increases. Trouble spread to the major industrial cities. The conflict reached a bloody climax in Langa, a crowded ramshackle township that lay just a mile and a half from the white city of Uitenhage.

Black squatters had flocked to Langa because they could walk to their jobs in the white part of town and avoid having to pay bus fares. Since the township was established 30 years earlier, virtually no new housing had been built there, as part of the government's strategy to discourage blacks from coming to the cities. Half of the residents lived in shacks built of wood and corrugated metal scraps insulated with old newspapers. There was only one paved road, no electricity, and there were just 28 water taps for 30,000 people. Nearly 60 percent of working-age people were unemployed, and the average income for a household of six was $90 a month.

Langa was fertile ground for the UDF. Community organizations affiliated with the Front defeated a rent increase in 1984 and forced 15 of the 16 black councilors to resign in February 1985. Black policemen fled, and white police grew tense as conflict raged a stone's throw away from a white residential neighborhood. Finally, on March 21, 1985, the police panicked and shot dead at least 21 blacks who were walking to a funeral. It was the bloodiest single incident of the past three years.

Eighty thousand people attended the funeral. When I visited Langa afterward, residents were holding midday rallies in church halls and schoolchildren hopscotched up the street singing songs that beckoned guerrillas to liberate them. Block by block the UDF organized street committees, which dealt with all issues facing the residents, ranging from domestic quarrels to broad UDF strategy. By 1986 students were boycotting classes and enforcing a black consumer boycott of white-owned stores in Uitenhage. The UDF affiliates grew stronger. Architects and city planners were hired to find a way to upgrade the township.

Today Langa simply doesn't exist. Last June and July police rounded up Langa's leaders, then drove flatbed and pickup trucks into the township and bundled everyone off to a remote, less troublesome hillside a few miles past the industrial section of town. Eurilia Banda recounted all this sadly last month as she showed me the house at Number 3 Ntungwana Street, where she grew up. It is the only house left standing. The entire hillside that was Langa stretches out vacant except for the four empty churches that the God-fearing white authorities didn't dare bulldoze. Green scrub bushes have grown over the bits of rubbish left behind.

The leaders of Langa heard about the elimination of their town while sitting helplessly in indefinite detention. One leader, Weza Made, managed to smuggle out a scribbled note saying that he had heard of the fate of Langa, and complaining of hunger and isolation. "I have written many times and sent many messages, but I get no reply. I am having a difficult time. For three days I had one meal a day and sometimes I sleep very hungry." He begs for a visit or a food parcel. "I suffer greatly from hunger and loneliness. I feel lost, as if no one loves me any longer."

BUT EVEN before the destruction of Langa, the UDF faced serious disaffection among its followers. It pushed the school boycott too far, upsetting parents who wanted their children in school. The township has only four shops, and the boycott of white stores made shopping difficult. UDF leaders now concede that future boycotts must be limited in time or targeted against specific companies or groups. So-called "peoples' courts" in Langa, run by UDF officials, meted out harsh punishments to suspected informers, people who declined to join the boycott, and common criminals. There were numerous necklace killings; people were hit with *sjamboks* (bullwhips) or given strokes with canes. "The comrades took one lady who had bought goods in town and tore up her new shoes and tore her clothes and painted her," says John Gomomo, chief shop steward at the Uitenhage VW plant. "The UDF

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didn't have control over these young guys at all."

After all the residents were relocated from Langa, a gang of vigilantes turned on the comrades who had eluded police. Wielding spears, iron bars, and clubs, they killed four UDF activists and beat several others. The group, which calls itself the African Parents Concerned Committee, has little support here. It is trying to cultivate followers by handing out food, but people believe the food is donated by the government. The APCC has at least the tacit support of the police. Bands of armed men holding captured UDF supporters have been waved through police roadblocks.

But surprisingly few tears were shed for the Langa comrades. Many residents were fed up with more than two years of upheaval. Kelman Befile, a store owner who had given evidence against the police at an inquiry into the massacre at Langa in 1985, now backs the APCC. He complains that the comrades extorted "contributions" of $150 a month plus donations of goats, turkeys, and chickens. They reasoned that he was earning extra money because the black consumer boycott of white stores was bringing in extra business. They cited a clause from the Freedom Charter of the African National Congress that says "the people shall share in the country's wealth." A young friend of Befile, Lukhaniso Matschaka, acknowledges that he was among the 400 people who went on a rampage against UDF followers. "I was woken up around 4 a.m. by a number of people carrying sticks who said we must chase the comrades. I went with them. Willingly."

ELSEWHERE ON the Eastern Cape, the government has been more heavy-handed in sowing divisions in township politics. In a town called Graaf Reinet the police detained Joyce Stewart, a mixed-race secretary at the local primary school, and her husband, Xavier, a carpenter. Joyce was the secretary of the Graaf Reinet Residents Association, a UDF affiliate. The police offered the couple $500 a month each to work as informers. Both say they flatly refused.

But while in police custody, Xavier was driven around the town in the back of a police car to make it appear as though he was cooperating. Officers would stop at a café and ask for a soda and sandwich. "It's for Xavier," they would say. Using wiretaps of meetings and phone calls, police gave some activists verbatim accounts of their conversations with the Stewarts and asserted that the Stewarts were informing. By the time the Stewarts got out of detention, suspicion about them was rife. "We are quite isolated now," Mrs. Stewart says. Most protest in Graaf Reinet, which was one of the first flash points in 1984, has ended.

The disruption of the UDF opens the way for the government to try once again to seize the initiative in the black townships. The government plans to improve living conditions there and thus address the roots of unrest. "I don't think that democracy is the relevant factor for the masses in South Africa," the defense minister, General Magnus Malan, told an Afrikaans magazine. "For them, it is all about satisfying their own material needs."

But it is unlikely that the government's distribution of new $450 shacks can satisfy even those basic needs. At the moment, the Langa refugees have been dumped in conditions similar to those they left behind. There is no running water (a tank truck drops water in open black vats), and some people are still living in tents distributed during the removal. Langa had been growing at the rate of ten shacks a day, and the new township is growing at least that fast. With the black population rising rapidly and with the economy ailing, the South African government will have trouble making up for 40 years of neglect.

DESPITE THE WRECKAGE of the UDF, the group has altered the political vocabulary and atmosphere of black politics. The black political agenda has been set: majority rule, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, and an end to the homeland system. (In the late 1970s and early 1980s, these issues were not on the agendas of the disparate local organizations.) And a spirit of defiance remains. Virtually no one in any major black township is paying rent. Key prosecution witnesses in treason trials have failed to show up. "Public events have been curtailed, but the mood of the people hasn't changed," says a lawyer in Port Elizabeth. And though the UDF has been defeated (at least for now) in the townships around Port Elizabeth, conservative blacks and vigilantes haven't made many inroads.

Despite the internecine violence that accompanied the uprisings in the townships, the UDF demonstrated the ability to mobilize an unprecedented number of people and unite them across class and tribal lines. The UDF was sometimes equivocal about violence directed at black collaborators and the black policemen occupying the townships. But even in the face of constant government provocation, the UDF tried to restrain the violence and to direct black anger against the government, and not other blacks. The street committees were in part designed to break up the squads of militant youths and force them to work with older and more moderate residents.

The emergence of the UDF has also helped the exiled African National Congress. Many of the founders of the UDF were former members of the ANC and former inmates of the Robben Island prison, where Mandela was jailed until recently. The UDF differs politically from the ANC only in declining to advocate violence against the government. The UDF thus gives the ANC a kind of voice within the country, which the ANC counts on.

The danger is that neither the government nor the UDF will be strong enough to assert control over the massive black townships, yet each will be strong enough to cripple the other. Unable to govern effectively, the South African government might unleash squads of armed vigilantes, or battalions of black policemen after three-week crash courses, or might put naval units on reserve duty in black townships. The government believes these measures will bring about a return of what it calls "reason." Yet if the UDF is forced underground permanently, it is likely to be less democratic, more radical, and less subject to the pressure of public opinion. □

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ROCK & REAGANISM

Bruce Springsteen and the end of Reaganism.

DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF THE SHINING CITY

BY JEFFERSON MORLEY

ON NOVEMBER 10 Bruce Springsteen fans began lining up outside record stores to buy the first copies of a boxed five-record set called "Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band Live 1975-1985." Three days later President Reagan first acknowledged reports that his administration had sold weapons to the government of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran.

If scandal and album are a cultural coincidence, so too are the careers of Reagan and Springsteen. Both have become cultural icons by giving the American people a reflection, a vision, of themselves. Both deftly use the mass media to define what is American, to present a seemingly natural but carefully molded persona with which their audience can identify: Reagan as genial patriarch of "traditional" middle-class values; Springsteen as exuberant yet sensitive son of the working class. Columnist George Will, recognizing their similarities as pop culture figures during the 1984 presidential campaign, suggested that Springsteen and Reagan stood for the same thing: that "America is back."

Will's attempt to conscript the rock star into the Reagan crusade, though scorned, was not entirely misguided. Springsteen is conservative, both temperamentally and musically (though not politically; he gives to left-liberal causes such as unions and food banks, and recently appeared in an anti-apartheid rock video). Will's mistake was to portray Springsteen as an ornament on Reaganism, to view Springsteen's short hair, heterosexual demeanor, and fondness for the American flag as right-wing credentials. Springsteen's rock critic friends on the left are less superficial than Will when they cast Springsteen as leftist savior, but they are also succumbing to the old temptation of using a rock star for wish fulfillment. Such fans were impatient with Springsteen's mild response to the Reaganites' effort to co-opt him. Springsteen declined to appear in public with the president during the 1984 campaign, and, except for a few good-natured remarks in his concerts, left it at that.

Springsteen and Reagan confound sympathizers and critics alike by moving from one pop culture role to the next. The president can be the spokesman for a shimmering future or the abashed father explaining away some family embarrassment—like the killing of 241 Marines in Lebanon or the Challenger disaster—or the gruff sheriff enforcing (or breaking) international law. Springsteen moves with equal ease from greaser in a leather jacket to scraggly hippie in denim to all-American boy rocking and rolling in your average football stadium. They both stay credible regardless of what role they take up because their performances embody the values that their audiences want to believe in.

They also reverse the expected generational roles. The older man sounds young and the younger man sounds old. Reagan is the hedonist. He revels in the tumult of capitalism with little regard for its consequences; in happy dreams of consumption with little regard for their unreality; in the righteousness of "traditional" family values without ever having bothered to live them. Springsteen, while optimistic, is more cautious; this is his conservatism. He sings about failed factories and failed parents and about the difficulties of finding, as the title of one of his songs puts it, "Reason to Believe."

Nowhere is this paradox more evident than in the way each recalls the past in order to define the future. Springsteen is obsessed with confronting his own painful memories, with (in a recurring phrase in his songs) "the price you pay." Reagan, by contrast, is utopian. He sees the past as literally priceless—valuable beyond measure, yet costing nothing today. He relies on this mythology of the past in much the way a radical relies on ideology, as the blueprint for a glorious epoch in the making. The future is the Puritans' "shining city on a hill."

The '60s are the most important period of the past for both men. Springsteen, born in 1949, is a typical member of the baby boom generation. Reagan first won office in California in 1966 on the strength of his opposition to the emerging student movement. Springsteen's music and his memories are rooted in the period between the debut of Elvis Presley and the release of the Beatles' White Album. Reagan's politics are defined in opposition to the same period. His foreign policy defines itself as the rejection of the anti-war movement. His "supply-side" economic policies are promoted as the corrective to the "tax and spend" economic policies of the Great Society. His espousal of "traditional values" is a rhetorical rejection of cultural innovation since the '60s.

Scandal and album are occasions for taking stock of the '60s. The scandal is Reagan's refusal to explain or even to acknowledge his actions in the Iran-*contra* affair. Underlying all of Reagan's actions was the illusion that suffered most in the '60s: that America's good intentions enabled and entitled it to do anything. If we are confused and astounded by each new round of revelations, it is only an indication of how successful Reagan was at sustaining that illusion.

The live album is Springsteen's effort to make sense out of where he and his audience have come from in the last ten years. Springsteen's career is the funny and sad story of growing up after the '60s, of coming of age in what he called, in the title of his 1978 album, the "Darkness on the Edge of Town."

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In September 1974 a little-known rock musician named Bruce Springsteen was featured on the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek* in the same week. This remarkable burst of hype, long since forgotten, says less about Springsteen's mass popularity than it does about his appeal to an elite of rock critics and corporate executives at three of the country's largest media corporations. (Springsteen's first two albums, released by CBS Records, were both commercial duds.) Time Inc., Washington Post-Newsweek, CBS Records, and the critics understood that Springsteen was a figure who would help sell their products to the generation emerging out of the '60s.

Similarly, General Electric employed Reagan as a corporate spokesman from 1954 to 1962 because the affable matinee star who never outshone anyone seemed to them to be the embodiment of white middle-class conformity—what we might now call pre-'60s American values. Reagan's purpose wasn't simply to sell GE products any more than Springsteen's is simply to sell CBS records. They were hired because GE and CBS Records had identified cultural tastes and needed public figures to appeal to those tastes and shape them. The culture of capitalism discovered both Springsteen and Reagan; their status as cultural icons is not an accident.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Springsteen emerged from the heart of the post-'60s generation, from "Middle America," with the emphasis on the middle. He didn't belong to the relatively small counterculture that dominated elite college campuses and mass media coverage—though he was influenced by it. He was into cars, not acid or the Viet Cong. Yet in 1967, when he graduated from high school, he had long hair and didn't want to go to Vietnam. Nor did he belong to the "Silent Majority," that substantial but usually exaggerated part of the American public that wasn't young or black, that wasn't protesting, that wasn't rejecting traditional values, and that resented the "anything goes" attitude of many who were. Springsteen was, as he sings in one of his songs, "caught in a crossfire I don't understand."

CBS Records was similarly situated between mainstream and counterculture. Between 1964 and 1969, CBS Records went from doing 15 percent of its business in rock to 60 percent; its sales rose 15 to 20 percent annually. Perhaps foremost among record companies, CBS relied on advertising in the radical, sexually explicit, anarchistic underground press to reach its young customers. CBS had long since recognized the profits in transmitting the counterculture to the mainstream.

Mainstream culture and counterculture were feeding off of each other. As rock critic Jon Landau asked in *Rolling Stone* in 1971, "We say we are a counterculture, yet are we really so different from the culture against which we rebel?" Maybe not. Springsteen had signed with CBS in 1972, right at the point when, for better and worse, counterculture was becoming the new mainstream of American society. (Landau would go on to become Springsteen's manager and an important influence on his career.)

Springsteen begins his retrospective album in 1975, the year he assembled the E Street Band and figured out his rock 'n' roll ambitions. Most importantly, the '60s were unambiguously over: the Vietnam War had been lost, the oil embargo had brought a deep recession, and his own crazy-kid spirit had begun to fade.

The songs, though not organized in the order they were released, are arranged thematically to reflect the progress of Springsteen's career. In his first song Springsteen reminds his fans that the journey of the last ten years began in fear. "So you're scared and you're thinking/That maybe we ain't that young anymore," he sings plaintively in "Thunder Road." Well, Bruce tells his girl, he's not a hero and he doesn't have anything to offer, just a ride in his car out on a highway toward some lost sense of freedom. Unlike Jack Kerouac in the '50s or the easy riders of the '60s, Springsteen isn't seeking the freedom of "anything goes." Through the first third of the album he is an ordinary teenager—a silly romantic, a pseudo-poet, and all-around wise guy—who nevertheless wants something more.

By the middle third of the album, the false bravado is

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gone, and with it Springsteen's penchant for histrionics. These songs, drawn from all phases of his career, are fiercer and more desperate. They combine catchier melodies with harsher stories and a hard rock edge. The music is at once tougher and more lyrical, reflecting the tension within Springsteen himself. In songs like "Badlands" he is fighting off a vague sense of hopelessness with the conviction that "it ain't no sin to be glad you're alive."

Springsteen doesn't rig his emotional gambles. Sometimes he wins and sometimes he loses. What makes his downbeat songs such as "Darkness on the Edge of Town" and "Backstreets" inspiring is the faith that he musters even while imagining himself with the losers on the edge of society. But after giving a proud version of Woody Guthrie's populist national anthem "This Land is Your Land," Springsteen tests his own compassion and that of his fans by singing about "Johnny 99," a man who kills a night clerk in a stickup. He does not patronize this killer as "a victim of society." Although Johnny has been stripped of his dignity by an economy that won't give him a job, Johnny himself tells the judge that it was more than his debts that put the gun in his hand. People like Johnny, Springsteen says, are responsible for succumbing to "the meanness in this world." That weakness though is what makes him human. Johnny too was "Born in the USA"—and the ringing introductory chords of that song are the next thing you hear on the album.

WHICH EXPLAINS another intriguing cultural coincidence. The album *Born in the USA*, which elevated Springsteen from rock star to cultural icon, was released in June 1984. President Reagan, in what history is sure to see as the high tide of Reaganism, ran for re-election that fall on the slogan "It's Morning in America." Perhaps more than anything else, the album cover, which features Springsteen thrashing his guitar in front of an immense red, white, and blue flag, has linked him in the public mind with Reagan. Yet the patriotisms of the two men could not be more different.

In *Born in the USA* Springsteen turned to the theme of national birth because he believed that our common identity, forged in the pain of the past, could sustain Americans in

RIGHT ROCK

ROCK & REAGANISM

During the '60s, rock and liberal social protest were inseparably associated. But in some cases, this bond, like so many other coalitions that were forged in the political heat of that decade, has weakened in the Reagan era.

In fact, a few rock icons from the '60s have turned explicitly to the right. When they turned 40, many of them checked into detox, cut their hair, and started writing songs about staying straight. One of the most startling conversions was that of Neil Young, who wrote such protest anthems as "Southern Man" and drug epics such as "Mr. Soul." Now he is a Reaganite. His 1986 album *Landing On Water* includes "Hippie Dream," a repudiation of "Wooden Ships," a Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young tune that was a theme song of late-'60s revolutionaries: "The tie-dye sails / Are the screamin' sheets. / And the dusty trail / Leads to blood in the streets. / And the wooden ships / Are a hippie dream. / Capsized in excess / If you know what I mean."

T-Bone Burnett, producer of several twangy, all-American "roots-rock" bands, combines Woody Guthrie's sound with Nancy Reagan's agenda in his own recordings. His 1983 album, *Proof Through the Night*, portrays a lone man of decency in sex- and drug-crazed Secular Humanist America. In "The Sixties," he peers into the shriveled soul and addled brain of an ex-hippie. In other songs, he takes on child molesters, drugs, promiscuous women, and *Playboy* magazine. Burnett is much in demand as a producer. His studio band occasionally includes such figures from the Woodstock generation as the Who's Pete Townshend and Ry Cooder.

But the most authentic conservative band is Kansas City's Rainmakers. They started out as a party outfit called Steve, Bob, and Rich, who did fraternity favorites such as "Big Fat Blonde." When a record company got hold of them, they went Regional, getting a new name, string ties, and Thomas Hart Benton paintings on the album jacket.

Their debut album was loud, danceable hard rock with the crunch of the early Who. In their three-hour concerts, the Rainmakers are exuberant and flamboyant. Yet their lyrics seem like a cross between Friedrich von Hayek and Charles Murray. The most jarringly political tune is "Government Cheese":

Give a man a free house and he'll bust out the windows,
Put his family on food stamps, now he's a big spender,
No food on the table and the bills ain't paid
Cause he spent it all on cigarettes and PGA
They'll turn us all into beggars 'cause they're easier to please
They're feeding our people that government cheese

Give a man free food and he'll figure out a way
To steal more than he can eat 'cause he doesn't have to pay
Give a woman free kids and you'll find them in the dirt
Learning how to carry on the family line of work
They're feeding our people that government cheese.

They booed "Government Cheese" in Boston. But the tune drew wild cheers in Kansas City and elsewhere.

Many of today's record-buyers are the same young voters who went for Reagan in the last election. They pound computers and answer phones at the lower echelon of the service economy. They resent the welfare state. They like their president. Until now, no widely popular rock band had voiced their feelings (the way the Byrds and Dylan did for the '60s generation). The Rainmakers may change all that.

JEFFREY L. PASLEY

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the face of the "meanness in this world." Reagan turned to the idea of national rebirth in order to celebrate the promised restoration of a glorious and pain-free past. If Springsteen seemed to embody a mood of "America is back," it was because he had captured people's desire to come to grips with the legacy of the '60s. Reagan appealed to the desire to mythologize the '60s, especially the Vietnam War.

Reagan's mythology of the past succeeded with the public, not because it was right-wing, but because it tapped the myths of the '60s shared by left and right alike. The indignant claim that the anti-war movement was the real "noble cause" only helped Reagan. Whether rejected as a period of youthful stupidity or sentimentalized as a bygone period of unmatched idealism, the '60s were painless, and painlessness was what Reagan was offering in 1984.

Reagan had outflanked liberals on both the left and the right by adapting the myths of the '60s for his own purposes. His ideal social type, the entrepreneur, resembled no one so much as the hippie of the '60s. For both, freedom and self-fulfillment were identical; for both, the credo "Do your own thing" promised a better world. Like '60s radicals, Reagan envisioned the world politics as a duel between good and evil in which a group of Americans (radicals or Reaganites) appointed themselves as the good. "Amerika" the imperialist demon in the banners of '60s radicals became "Amerika" the besieged innocent in the 1987 miniseries. Both '60s radicals and '80s Reaganites believed that the virtue of their ends justified almost any means. Both viewed the niceties of democratic procedure as a sham that slowed them on their appointed rounds of historic duty. For '60s radicals, there was the infatuation with revolutionary violence and contempt for those foolish enough to disagree. For the infinitely more powerful Reaganites it was "anything goes" in Iran, in the National Security Council, in Nicaragua, and only God (and the special prosecutor) knows where else.

THE PAST has now caught up with both Springsteen and Reagan. Springsteen tells his audience, in two between-song monologues, what he thinks are the most important lessons of the '60s. With a churchlike organ playing softly in the background, he recounts how his father used to taunt him: "I can't wait until the army gets you, because they'll make a man out of you." He tells about getting his draft notice and how scared he was when he went to take his physical. When he got home his father asked him what happened; Bruce said he had failed the physical. His father just said, "That's good." The crowd roars at Douglas Springsteen's admission that he didn't want the army and the traditional values it stood for to capture his son after all. One lesson is that the "Silent Majority" had to acknowledge the wisdom of its children.

Springsteen brings us back to the future with "Seeds," a populist blues-rock screed about a homeless family living in their car outside Houston. He doesn't want to revive the '60s protest as much as show that it is now a part of the American mainstream. Then he plays uncle to the teenagers in the crowd, telling them about growing up in the '60s "with war on TV every night." He warns them that "the next time they're going to be coming after you," and grimly concludes that "in 1985 blind faith in your leaders or in anything will get you killed." To clinch the importance of remembering the anti-war movement, he and the band rip into "War," a Motown protest song from 1970 that opens with a mighty shout: "War / What is it good for? / Absolutely nothing." He wants to remind his fans that the rebellious ways of the '60s have been vindicated.

SPRINGSTEEN, though, is bound to disappoint those who expect him to lead their political crusades. When he warns his fans against having blind faith in their leaders, he does not exclude himself. He does not reject his own message any more than he abandons his past. In the final third of the album, devoted mostly to Springsteen's more recent songs, he returns to cruising down the highway toward "The Promised Land" or cutting up with a buddy in "Darlington County" or braving the terrors of New York City and the "Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out." He has reached maturity, but that hardly means he must become a political activist and abandon what he has always loved the most.

Springsteen, in fact, sounds just like he does at the beginning, like he's scared that maybe he isn't that young anymore. In the second song on the album, "Adam Raised a Cain," Springsteen sang about his painful relationship with his father: "Daddy worked his whole life for nothing but the pain / Now he walks these empty rooms looking for something to blame / You inherit the sins, you inherit the flames." By the end of the album, Springsteen has taken up the role of the father himself. In "My Hometown" a man drives down Main Street with his young son. As he sees the whitewashed store windows on Main Street, he remembers how his father had taken him for the same ride and how the town has declined. "Son, take a good look around," he tells his boy. "This is your hometown."

This is the end of the ride that began in 1975. Springsteen proclaims that he is still "Born to Run," but he sounds rueful about his youthful pledge of "No Surrender." He closes with "Jersey Girl," a sentimental lullaby for his true love (no doubt his wife, whom he married in 1985) and a gentle kiss-off to his huge audience. As with millions of his fans, Springsteen's new family marks the end of his coming of age.

Springsteen, though, would never pretend that we can escape inheriting the sins and the flames of the past. Reaganism is an essential part of the decade that Springsteen has covered in his retrospective album. In his melancholy ballad "The River," Springsteen asks himself the question that he says haunts him like a curse: "Is a dream a lie if it don't come true / Or is it something worse?" While Springsteen's own dreams seem to have come true, Reagan's dream has gone bad and become frightening. The homeless in Houston and the crooks on Wall Street and the Fifth Amendment patriots in Washington are proof that Reaganism has failed. Maybe it was a lie. Or maybe, Springsteen suggests, it was something worse. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Three from the Theater

Swimming to Cambodia
(Cinecom)

Lily Tomlin: The Film Behind the Show
(Broomfield Churchill)

Beyond Therapy
(New World)

It's always gratifying to see someone accomplish the impossible. Everyone knows that a good film cannot be made of a one-performer theater piece—everyone, that is, who hasn't seen Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's masterly six-hour work *Die Nacht*, with Edith Clever. Now here is another one-performer filmed theater piece, not comparable to *Die Nacht* in length or any other way except that it, too, accomplishes the impossible. *Swimming to Cambodia* is funny, pungent, obliquely grave, and its interest never flags.

The author-performer is Spalding Gray, who has been active for 20 years in the off-off-Broadway theater. He was one of the founders of the Wooster Group, which did a number of his pieces at the Performing Garage, the place where he first did *Swimming to Cambodia* and where the film was made. (I saw the piece last year when it moved up to Lincoln Center.) It could hardly be simpler. Gray, a pleasant-looking man in his early 40s, comes out onto a relatively bare stage, furnished only with a table and chair, a glass of water, and two stands from which he later pulls down maps. For the film, a blue-sky-and-clouds backdrop has been added. Gray wears an open sport shirt and chinos, and he carries a notebook, to which he occasionally refers or pretends to refer. Seated at the table, he tells us an autobiographical story. In the theater there was an intermission, and the whole ran just under two hours. For the film it has been condensed to 87 minutes with, of course, no intermission.

Jonathan Demme, who has been laureled by some for *Something Wild* and other films, directed. For me, this is his best work, reticent yet sage. Demme hasn't tried to compensate drastically for the "handicap" of a one-man show: he seems to relish the cinematic difficulty and just lets us enjoy the fact that, in the main, Gray's writing and performance are making this film. Demme moves in and out and often changes angles; he alters the lighting to underscore transitions; but none of this, except for one sudden close-up near the end, distracts. He has done only enough to make sure that our traditional filmic conditioning doesn't interfere with our enjoyment of Gray.

In 1983, Gray tells us, he was engaged for a small part in *The Killing Fields*, Roland Joffé's film about Sydney Schanberg's life during the end of the Vietnam War and after. Gray played a minuscule role as an aide to the American ambassador in Saigon. (A few clips are inserted.) Gray recounts his experiences during the filming, which was done in Thailand: the lush movie-company living, the general extravagance. He says that one small bit of his had to be shot 66 times, then had to be dubbed later in New York because of cricket noises on the sound track. But this account, amusing as it is, is only the main stem of the piece. Out of it branches much else: about his life in New York, his companions in the film company, his reaction to the beauty of Southeast Asia, especially the beaches. Yet, in his dry, maturely wide-eyed way, he also tells us tangentially how his involvement in this film made the starkness of the Vietnam War, especially the secret bombing of Cambodia, indelibly real to him. Gray comes on as an informal, somewhat garrulous and taking SoHo character who got involved in the making of a major picture; but behind that involvement, his adventures with friends, his samplings of Thai pot, and his enjoyment of a free ride, shadows lurk. I can't quite say that Gray's monologue did more to recreate the ghastliness of those last Saigon days than did *The Killing Fields*. But I wasn't a great admirer of Joffé's film, and I was more ironically moved by what seeps through this account from a man who lucked into a luxurious stay in a horribly haunted part of the world.

Lily Tomlin: The Film Behind the Show is, as the title says, not a film version of Tomlin's latest one-woman show; it's a documentary about the making of that show. The film takes us from an Austin, Texas, tryout in February 1985 to the opening on Broadway 20 months later, where the show—*The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*—succeeded. (It's now touring.) The film's producers/directors, Joan Churchill and Nicholas Broomfield, traveled with Tomlin; her author, Jane Wagner; and the show's staff to a number of cities. Together with a few interludes back at Tomlin's California home, parts of the show were filmed, along with backstage conferences, meetings in hotel suites, etc.

It would all be just one more good document of the making of a show except that it implicitly underscores a truth: stars become sacred monsters, all the more sacred and monstrous when there is a cast of only one. This is not to impugn Tomlin the woman, who may be sterling: the fuss and focus of a star enterprise would have made a sacred monster of Albert Schweitzer.

Tomlin can be a moving actress—for me, she gave the best performance in *Nashville*. But as a soloist, she sometimes lapses out of the constant magic that such work requires. She can become prosy, even trite, which is very rarely true of (say) Carol Burnett. Tomlin's

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Outrageous Fortune. Shelley Long, delicately goofy, and Bette Midler, wonderfully vulgar, in a wildly farcical spy chase adjusted for their gender. (3/2/87)

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Working Girls. Deceptively flat verism about a Park Avenue brothel. Anger at the exploitation of women is tacit but strong. (3/16/87)

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telephone operator, for instance, is a banal bore. When all goes right, in such characters as Agnus Angst and the Bag Lady, for instance—which means when she has evoked Wagner's keenest writing—Tomlin justifies her solo status with sparkle and intelligence. Still, what I remember most clearly from the bits we're permitted to see here is not Tomlin's talent but Wagner's. Examples: we hear of two T-shirts. One is inscribed: "Whales! Save *Us*!"; the other: "Nuclear War? There Goes My Career."

Robert Altman has concentrated in recent years on the filming of plays, *Secret Honor* and *Fool for Love* among them. In the ones I saw, he tried hard to impress us with his virtuosity. He keeps trying—with an alleged comedy called *Beyond Therapy* by that perennial Kampus Kut-up, Christopher Durang. As it happens, I had the duty to see the play twice, off and on Broadway, thus was steeped in Durang's facile comic reversals and slick hyper-yuppie references. I went to see the film principally because, in descending order of interest, Glenda Jackson, Tom Conti, and Jeff Goldblum are in it. All of them do not do their best: there is no room for their best. But they do what they can.

The place is said to be New York, though the exteriors are plainly Paris, where, I hear, Altman now lives. The initiating plot gimmick is a restaurant meeting between Goldblum and Julie Hagerty after she answers his personal ad. The meeting prospers until he casually mentions his male lover. Complications follow, enforced by leaden whimsy. The twists involve two psychotherapists, his (Jackson) and hers (Conti). The film climaxes with what is supposed to be a riot of farcical fun in the restaurant where the couple met. I could hardly start laughing.

Jackson slices in her lines and movement neatly. Conti, a quietly gifted man, gives his therapist an Italian accent and comical boredom, and gets whatever chuckles are going. Goldblum has some craft and an air of bemused serenity through fair weather and foul that makes him appealing. Hagerty, unappealing, is shockingly devoid of craft for someone with all her experience.

Altman persists in puncturing his inflated reputation. High on the list of his lacks is a talent for brittle comedy and knockabout farce, yet they are the genres he chooses here. And he chooses them as written by Durang. Kismet. □

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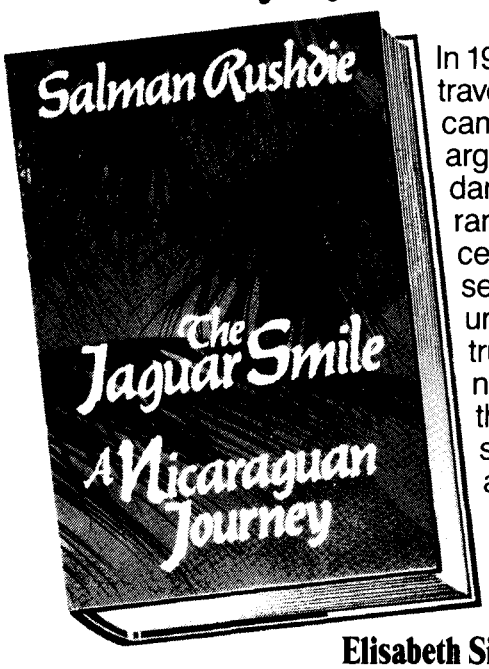

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Postmodernism, qu'est-ce que c'est?

ROCK & REAGANISM

START MAKING SENSE

BY CROCKER COULSON

THE THEATER where I saw David Byrne's *True Stories* was a cramped black box, but it reverberated with raucous laughter. The audience laughed at the sheet metal sheds that pass for buildings in Texas; they laughed at the woman bedridden by her indolence; they laughed at the lovers whose vows were punctuated by flatulence; they laughed at the monstrous shopping mall that posed as civilization. They laughed so loudly and frequently that they drowned out the sound track. They laughed at every deadpan line that Byrne delivered. Even when I found myself laughing with them, their guffaws were disturbing. Their laughter was reflexive; it seemed to signal neither malice nor recognition. It was a dead laughter.

Often it was difficult to say precisely where the joke lay. *True Stories* chronicles the small absurdities that compose the life of Virgil, an imaginary town in Texas. The characters and ideas are drawn from clips Byrne collected from publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Texas Monthly*, and the *Weekly World News*. Excerpts from these articles are woven into the script, sometimes without alteration, and interspersed with the pop songs that are at the heart of the film. This fictional documentary is narrated by Byrne, who, in a tone normally reserved for 1950s hygiene films, spins out commentary on the social and architectural landscape. Navigating a red convertible down the highways that cross the flat expanse, he explores the Brave New World of instant suburbia, with its shopping malls, silicon sweatshops, and prefabricated homes that hip hop into the void. The film is part of a genre that might be termed the Middle-American Grotesque, recent examples of which include Jonathan Demme's *Something Wild*, David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*, and Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart*.

In addition to the personal connections (Byrne wrote the title track for *Something Wild* and Henley co-scripted *True Stories*), all of these movies are premised on the idea that there is something deeply weird and perverse about life in the Heartland—something that only someone from New York or L.A. can appreciate. In *True Stories* the tone alternates between cool satire and disaffected enthusiasm. When Byrne pays a visit to Louis Fyne (a man so desperate for matrimony that he airs advertisements on cable TV and plants a neon "Wife Wanted" sign on his front lawn) or tags along at Virgil's "Celebration of Special-*ness*" (complete with a lawn mower brigade and Shriners in miniature red Mustangs) there is a strong feeling of affectionate contempt. At times Byrne feigns such a degree of astonishment that the phrases "Gee whiz" and "Golly" hang in the air. But it is a simulated earnestness, the earnestness of the local booster as imagined by a musician from New York.

True Stories
by David Byrne
(Penguin Books, 191 pp., $15.95)

True Stories
directed by David Byrne
(Warner Bros.)

True Stories
the Talking Heads and David Byrne
(Sire Records)

Sounds from True Stories—David Byrne
(Sire Records)

"Wild, Wild Life"
video by the Talking Heads and David Byrne

As the camera pans over rows of identical multicolor metal sheds, Byrne observes:

> Metal buildings are the dream that modern architects had at the beginning of the century come true, but they themselves don't realize it. If they followed their own theories to the letter—form follows function, using mass-production techniques—what you end up with is a metal building! And when you look at it that way, it's beautiful. The reason no architect ever says that is that you don't need an architect to build metal buildings. You order them out of a catalog.

What is this? A critique of the mass-produced functionalism of America's insta-cities? Or does he really see a hint of the sublime in these hideous structures? Then there is Byrne's visit to Varicorp, the booming computer company that employs nearly every citizen in Virgil. The camera moves down the assembly line where the characters work, soldering together circuit boards at the minimum wage. But nobody seems to be paying any attention to their work; instead they are lost in a patter fed by tabloids, pop tunes, and dime-store romances—not immiserated, but certainly alienated. For a few moments Byrne flirts with complex subjects (the relation between technology and alienation, between mass culture and political consciousness); but he veers back swiftly into the safety of shopping mall jokes.

Byrne's attitude to his material is important because the film assumes that the narrator is the only normative element in a landscape of oddities. But Byrne's inflection provides no hint; he is at once superficially celebratory and deeply patronizing. Byrne's expressionless face reminds one of David Letterman's frozen smile as he questions some unwary Nebraskan about the inanities of life in Omaha. In sum, this is not exactly a sympathetic exploration of the Human Comedy, in the amused but large spirit of, say, Fellini's *Amarcord*, whose small-town grotesques inspire as much compassion as laughter. Byrne sounds a world from which he and, by implication, *we* are radically detached. And his neutrality masks scorn.

In Dallas, in whose environs *True Stories* was shot, the movie has been immensely popular. While it was being made, local radio stations tracked Byrne's movements and dedicated songs to him. When it was released this fall, Byrne flew down for special benefit screenings with local celebrities. Defending the film, the *Dallas Morning News* disparaged "New York-hip critics" who interpreted *True Stories* as satirical. "Obviously someone is taking *True Stories* much too seriously," the reviewer wrote. "Fortunately it's not David Byrne."

The attendant ironies have not gone unnoticed. John Podhoretz, the second-generation neoconservative who edits *In-*

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sight magazine, remarked:

> With *True Stories*, both album and movie, we have the astonishing sight of David Byrne, defender of bourgeois values. The movie is a delightful throwaway. . . . Byrne appears as a guileless Mr. Rogers, introducing America to a neighborhood whose residents are well-adjusted eccentrics.

It would be easy to infer that Podhoretz (along with *Time* and the entire state of Texas) simply missed the point. More likely, the neoconservative is eager to find an ally in the postmodernist—an ally in the love of Middle America. The synthetic irreality of Byrne's New Frontier is the shadow image of the neoconservative's American idyll—where the market functions perfectly and where racism, anti-Semitism, and brute provincialism are mere memories. The ambiguous stance of *True Stories* allows Byrne both to achieve popular success and to keep his distance from a despised Middle America; and it permits Podhoretz to praise the suburban utopia where he would never think of living.

WITH *True Stories* David Byrne has emerged as the most prominent member of a far-flung group of artists—including Laurie Anderson, Robert Wilson, and Philip Glass—who constitute America's anointed avant-garde. They are all artists who stretch across many media, who are attracted to projects of Wagnerian grandiosity, and who embrace an aesthetic loosely labeled "postmodern." As members of America's official counterculture, they have been responsible for breaking down the boundaries between high art and popular culture, for bringing "difficult" art into the living rooms and dorm rooms of average Americans. They are the darlings of the mass media, perhaps because they are so close to it, and because they owe it so much. *True Stories* is emblematic of this new art in its very multiplicity. From this one theme, Byrne has squeezed a film (which is more accurately a string of music videos), two albums, a book, a video, and a work of performance art—as well as a stream of profiles, reviews, and articles.

Time, the final arbiter of mass culture, put Byrne's face on its cover, using a filtered collage that Byrne himself designed. It declared that the Talking Heads "were a prominent part of a creative community that kicked avant-garde American culture into a newer, more accessible shape." And it declared that David Byrne was "Rock's Renaissance Man." The appellation is ironically suggestive about the nature of artistic range in postmodern culture. Record a song: you are a musician. Put it on video: you are a video artist. Design the album cover: you are a visual artist. Hire some writers to string songs onto a plot line: you are a screenwriter. Make it into a film: you are a director. Publish the screenplay: you are an author. More than an adaptation to new media, there has been a shift in the very idea of creativity. "Genius" no longer carries with it the connotation of originality. It is, rather, a gift for pastiche, a matter of manipulating prefabricated ideas and forms.

Byrne's canonization is particularly peculiar because his musical career has centered on the more disturbing aspects of America's media-saturated society. (A line from the album *True Stories* quips: "You've got *Time* and *Newsweek* / They're the same to me!") While the Talking Heads, the band that he founded in 1975 with two other graduates of the Rhode Island School of Design, has been through a variety of musical incarnations, Byrne's lyrics have been consistently obsessed with a culture that is filtered through a television screen. Prior to forming the Talking Heads, Byrne conducted artistic "opinion polls" and gave dramatic readings from television game shows. "Found a Job," recorded in 1978, featured the exchange:

> "Damn that television . . . what a bad picture!"
> "There's nothing on tonight," he said, "I don't know what's the matter!"
> "Nothing's ever on," she said, "So I don't know why you bother."

Both in their music and in their stage manner, the Talking Heads' early work was a complex reaction against the inflating and homogenizing tendencies of the networks and newsweeklies.

IN THE mid-1970s, popular music was dominated by two sorts of theatricality: the synthetic sexuality of disco and the anti-musical posturing of punk. Here, the oleaginous Travolta lip-syncing melodies generated by a machine; there, the boorish adolescence of the Ramone clan. At both ends of the musical spectrum, there was the same absence of formal standards, the same overblown cult of personality. In such a context, a group whose members appeared dressed in oxford shirts and Izods and stood poker straight as they performed—a group such as the Talking Heads—was a refutation of both the mass-marketed sensuality and the exaggerated subjectivity that burdened popular music. And a refutation you could almost dance to. Minimalist in their musical arrangements, the Talking Heads stripped away the accretions of drum and guitar solos and the phallocentric gestures of a corrupted rock 'n' roll. What remained were bare, almost jarring chords and tight structures. The music was less a revolt than a strategy for survival in a world in which the television is never switched off. Yet nine years later *Time* celebrates Byrne for making radical art palatable to television tastes.

When the Talking Heads first climbed onto the stage at CBGBs in their geek attire, the standard stage dress was either glitzy, camped-up silks or black leather and chains. Byrne's buttoned oxford was an aesthetic countermove. The Talking Heads were not simply preppies; they were art rockers dressed as preppies. In that moment Attitude was born. Attitude, which flowered in the East Village of the late '70s and early '80s, is postmodernism as a lifestyle, a way of reappropriating the castoff and démodé. Its power derives not from the cultural objects themselves, but from the placing and the jostling of cultural objects in startling and contradictory contexts. What had struck the avatars of Attitude, and unnerved them, was the amazing multiplicity of contexts in American life. Instead of choosing between them, they chose to refer to them all. Thus eclecticism became the hallmark of their postmodernist art, which was to reflect, and comment upon, the eclecticism of the culture that surrounded them. The situation has been nicely summed up by the French theorist Jean-François Lyotard:

> Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner. . . . It is easy to find a public for eclectic works. By becoming kitsch, art panders to the confusion which reigns in the "taste" of the patrons. Artists, gallery owners, critics, and public wallow together in the "anything goes," and the epoch is one of slackening. But this realism of the "anything goes" is in fact that of money; in the absence of aesthetic criteria, it remains possible and useful to assess the value of works of art according to the profits they yield.

The juxtapositions of the postmodernist "Renaissance" take meaning from the objects and transfer it to the context;

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that is, they are a pose. Attitude is a ponytailed bobby-soxer with a single pink fetus dangling from one earlobe, or a man in pinstripes who wears a Mickey Mouse watch. Attitude was also the Talking Heads; their hypernormality was a way of being hip in a world in which theatrical deviance was the norm. They were hip because they were square. The contradiction (or rather, the denial of contradiction, since nothing any longer excluded anything else) was apparent in Byrne's voice. When the lyrics were most disturbing, Byrne remained dispassionate. When they were anodyne, his voice took on a whelping, manic tinge. Byrne described this mixture of affectlessness and hysteria, this indirection, to the *New York Times*:

> I felt most comfortable . . . speaking in a very ambiguous way. If I said exactly what I felt, because of . . . my inabilities as a singer, it would come across as corny or kind of flat. And so I find that the way to say things that seem to touch me is . . . to put them into a kind of language that in most cases isn't narrative or literal.

In the Talking Heads' early songs, this ironic use of language and musical form revealed the artist's distance from his own surroundings. If the delivery was schizophrenic, it reflected the schizophrenia of a consumer society and its imperative constantly to ingest cultural "products" that are detached from their cultural context. Some lines from "Once in a Lifetime" approach the disorienting effects of consumer indigestion:

> And you may find yourself in a beautiful house
> With a beautiful wife
> And you may ask yourself
> Well . . . how did I get here?

In these lines there is a feeling of cool, suppressed, abstract madness, of the anxiety of living in a television culture.

BUT THIS psychological tension proved impossible to sustain. The band began to change. With *Remain in the Light* and the albums that followed, the Talking Heads entered what can be described as their own postmodern phase, featuring a music that was emotionally brighter and musically fuller. This music was "easier" to listen to, and found acceptance with a wider variety of audiences. It borrowed percussive and polyrhythmic elements from African and Middle Eastern music; the band more than doubled the number of musicians on stage, including Steve Scales on African drums, funk bassist Busta Jones, British guitarist Adrian Belew, and two female background vocalists.

Then the band changed again, and again in the direction of popularity and postmodernist slackness. In its most recent albums—*Little Creatures* and *True Stories*—the Talking Heads returned to their quartet configuration. More importantly, instead of synthesizing Western and non-Western elements, the band moved into wholesale appropriations of American popular music, packing each album with a half-dozen musical idioms that were more "quotations" than "translations" of their sources. Something for everybody. Finally, Byrne's voice had been purged of its trademark anxiety; instead of his controlled hysteria, he was actually crooning his lyrics.

Byrne outlines this shift in sensibility in his introduction to *True Stories*, in a few sentences that could stand as the credo of Reaganism: "For years we have been taught not to like things. Finally somebody said it was OK to like things. This was a great relief."

Wonderful! But what sort of things does Byrne like? Well, he likes Gospel music and Tex-Mex and Country & Western and Zydeco music. (Each gets one song on each of the last two albums.) He likes these musical styles

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about as much as the interchangeable Sears, Roebuck cowboy suits he wears as the narrator of *True Stories*. "The big difference between us and punk groups is that we like KC and the Sunshine Band," remarked Talking Heads drummer Chris Frantz. As with attire, so with musical styles: when there is no longer any urgency to choose one style, all styles become meaningless. Of course this casual appropriation of pop forms is a kind of reconciliation. But it is also the severest insult. It treats the matter of style as if nothing serious is at stake.

This is not populism; it is mass culture as kitsch. Byrne's facetious enthusiasm for mass culture is not a sincere celebration but a profitable surrender, a belated avowal that there can be nothing better. In this sense, his foray into the musical and cultural milieu of Texas was just a rummaging through the detritus of Americana: a Great Salvage Mission. It began from the premise that modernity has failed, that all that remains is to polish up bits and pieces from the cultural rubbish heap. Byrne describes his film as dealing "with stuff that's too dumb for people to have bothered to formulate opinions on." It is fine to eulogize the banal; but this is cynicism.

ONE OF THE most revealing moments in *True Stories* comes when "The World's Laziest Woman" stumbles upon a Talking Heads video during her endless days of television viewing. (Of the woman, Byrne remarks: "She doesn't work. She has enough money; she doesn't have to. Would you?") Surrounded by mechanical devices that feed, dress, and comfort her, the woman snaps from channel to channel, when suddenly the Talking Heads appear on the screen. The woman is at once enlivened and disoriented, unsure whether the images are a "commercial or [a] video"—her two favorite genres. "They've got that commercial attitude. I think they're selling something, but I don't know what it is." As the band moves through "Wild Life," the spare, upbeat pop song that is virtually a parody of the early Talking Heads, the musicians are one by one dipped in milk chocolate and wrapped in shiny tinfoil.

Here, at last, Byrne begins to show signs of grasping the cultural place of his own artistic practice. The video is a vision of an aesthetic dystopia, in which the difference between art and advertising has collapsed. Like Camp (an aesthetic strategy that developed long before the political advances of today's gay liberation seemed possible), Attitude is awash with resignation. Just as Camp allowed the homosexual of the 1950s to evade his sexuality without altering social convention, Attitude emerged when the artist accepted the impossibility of effecting social change or producing aesthetic meaning. Instead he comes to rest in the consumerist ethos. In *True Stories*, Byrne has put forth as an ideal an art whose highest achievement is to whet our appetite for chocolates.

THE COSMIC FLASHER

Look Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe by David Herbert Donald

(Little, Brown, 579 pp., $24.95)

In this excellent biography of Thomas Wolfe, David Donald reports that in 1935 Wolfe's second novel, *Of Time and the River*, came first in two categories in a *Saturday Review* poll of critics. It was voted both the best and the worst novel of the year. Another harsh verdict was issued by Bernard de Voto the following year: that Wolfe was a "genius" wholly lacking in form. Robert Penn Warren found "enormous talent" in the second novel, but saw Wolfe as simply unable to distinguish his life from his fictional account of it; as he put it, "Shakespeare was *not* Hamlet." And Harold Bloom, reviewing Donald's biography, makes not even these concessions to Wolfe's powers: "There is no possibility for critical dispute about Wolfe's literary merits; he had none whatsoever." Whatever we make of these judgments, we must ask what there was about Wolfe's work that took so many readers by storm in the 1930s. Donald supplies more (and more acutely chosen) evidence than earlier biographers, though his work relates to the man rather than to the nature and effects of his books, questions Donald doesn't seem equipped to handle.

An American historian of distinction, Donald is best known for his work on Charles Sumner, Abraham Lincoln, and the period following the Civil War. He was raised in Mississippi, and had an enthusiasm for Wolfe as a youngster. Returning to Wolfe's books in the 1970s, he found him still impressive, both as a prose poet and as a chronicler of his times. This biography is the result of much labor over Wolfe's manuscripts, and over the extensive body of documentation and commentary associated with the life of a writer whose material was his life and his family. Donald's story is masterful as an evocation of a character and a period; you don't have to share his convictions about Wolfe's literary achievement to be engaged by it.

Donald finds graver issues in Wolfe's relations with his editors than I do. Maxwell Perkins of Scribner's oversaw the first two novels; Edward Aswell, a junior editor at Harper and Brothers, assembled the last two out of the mountain of manuscript that remained after Wolfe's early death in 1938. Perkins, designated literary executor before Wolfe's abandonment of Scribner's, lived long enough to sanction Aswell's selection from the manuscripts that made up Wolfe's third novel, *The Web and the Rock*. Aswell tied segments together with sentences culled from the manuscript, wrote (and even dated) a prefatory note that he attributed to Wolfe, and made revisions in Wolfe's prose. But the significant fact is that what emerged as the novel was, in the mass, unmistakably Wolfe's work.

It appears that Wolfe secreted words as copiously, and with about as much deliberation, as other men sweat. Dissatisfied, he did not revise or discard what he had written. He simply pushed it aside and started over again, from scratch. The one thing his editors could count on for continuity was that his writing invariably centered on a succession of things that had happened to him or to his family, or on what he had been told about the lives of his ancestors. On this basis alone Aswell put two novels together and got them successfully into print. Elizabeth Nowell had done much the same thing for Wolfe during his lifetime. She had extricated publishable stories from his wooden box of manuscript.

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Perkins's editorial intervention had been crucial in connection with *Look Homeward Angel*, Wolfe's first and most important novel, which was begun in 1926 and published in 1929. He convinced Wolfe to prune episodes that did not carry forward his account of the central character, Eugene Gant. Donald regrets Perkins's excision of Wolfe's documentation of the life of Asheville, North Carolina, where Wolfe grew up, but we must credit Perkins with a sense of the movement essential to the book's effect on its audience. A child, surrounded by a family of violent and bewildering giants, comes, as a youth, to imagine a gianthood overtopping and transcending theirs, while at the same time mourning the loss of that childhood period. This mixture of regret and extravagant hope became Wolfe's signature, the emotional brew he offered his readers and himself. A good many of us had a "Wolfe period."

The novel suggests that Wolfe had been soused, like a puppy in a bath, in torrents of speech. Eugene Gant's father spouts passages from anthologies of verse and from *King Lear*, composes thunderous tirades directed at his wife, and subsides, when caught out in drunkenness or lechery, into wailing monologues of self-pity. Each member of the family is presented by means of a characteristic tic associated with speech: the father wetting his thumb, the mother laying her finger alongside her nose, a brother lifting his head to appeal to an unseen familiar. Eugene's schoolmistress, almost inarticulate with emotion over passages from Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and the Romantic poets, plants and nurtures the notion that Eugene, too, may achieve a towering speech and make a world-enveloping network of words, a rhetoric that will spill over the encircling mountains to embrace America.

DONALD does his best work in his account of Wolfe's life after he left Asheville for college at Chapel Hill. Wolfe was 16, a vociferous youth with a loping gait, poor, and full of uncertainty about himself and his social status. (He was the son of a stonecutter and a boardinghouse keeper.) Wolfe managed to make a splash by writing and acting out a plausible claim to distinction. He had long been an avid reader, he had some acquaintance with the Latin classics, and he was as tall as his talk. (Donald says he reached six feet five inches.) Wolfe gained the attention of a cranky

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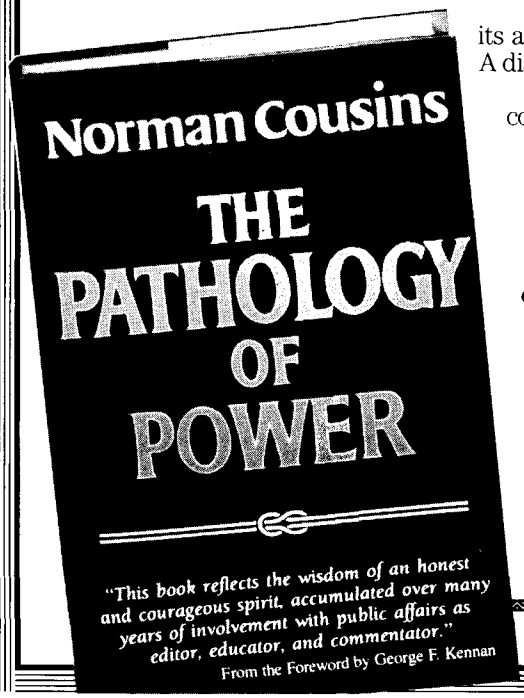
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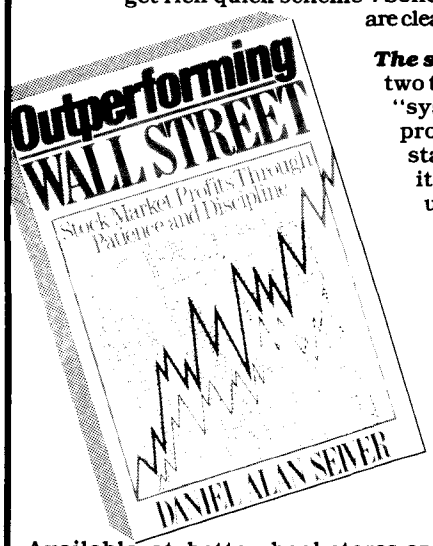

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philosopher named Horace Williams, but he never thereafter showed interest in any intellectual pursuit.

Wolfe went on to Harvard as a graduate student in George Pierce Baker's playwriting workshop. Baker treated him well, and Wolfe remained for three years (1920-23). But the production in his third year of an ambitious play, overcrowded with Asheville characters, was only moderately successful, and he did not secure a New York production. Still nourishing theatrical hopes, he settled in New York and took an appointment at New York University, where he taught composition. The only roles in which he ever meshed more or less comfortably, judging by Donald's account, were those of student and teacher. He did well at Harvard; he charmed his students in New York, and was meticulous in correcting their writing.

At the end of a trip to Europe, Wolfe met Aline Bernstein. His sense of himself as a hungry wanderer whose powers had gone unrecognized was abruptly replaced by a season of relative contentment. Aline was 20 years his senior, was married to a wealthy man she was much attached to, and had two children. She fell deeply in love with Wolfe, and formed an unquestioning belief in his talent. She furnished an apartment in which she could visit Wolfe almost daily. Erotically fulfilled, and fed by an accomplished cook, he seems to have been able to believe, if only for a time, that his life had secure boundaries. His lover was a gifted scene and costume designer, immersed in the liveliest theatrical ventures of the day. She arranged a summer tour to Europe for Wolfe and herself, during which he settled down to the writing of his first novel. But this profound attachment to Aline (like his attachment to Perkins, his future editor) was to end badly.

THE disproportionate claims on reality that occur in youthful fantasy emerge in adult life as actions; and in Wolfe's case the consequences were violent, callous, and ugly. He characteristically drew too heavily on the commitments other people made to him. (Perkins's gift of professional attention and respect and Aline's tender of passionate love are the instances that Donald illustrates most fully.) Having made an investment almost as inclusive as that of a child in a parent, Wolfe in each case announced that he had been betrayed and abandoned. He denounced Aline as a Jew, an utterly selfish woman, a dabbler in the falsity of the theater, promiscuous, and so on. The hapless Perkins, who lived in a world of reciprocal obligations amid the gentlemanly atmosphere of the house of Scribner, took Wolfe's defection hard, but Wolfe had come to feel that he was being stifled.

There is nothing direct and clear-cut about these withdrawals. Wolfe's attacks on Aline were followed by retractions, by expressions of unbounded gratitude, by efforts to reconstitute the original tie. There was both psychic overdetermination and an element of reality in these upheavals. Wolfe *was* too dependent on Perkins, although there is no sign that he could have done better without him. His affair with Aline Bernstein *was* quasi-incestuous, although it was, in his circumstances, a piece of enormous good fortune. But the underlying pattern is the same, and it applies also to his relation to his Harvard friend Kenneth Raisbeck. All three paid a price for the fact that nobody could fill the void within Wolfe.

Donald has a gift for the needed detail. Thus he notes that Wolfe, like his father, ate great quantities of food; a psychiatrist who traveled with him observed that Wolfe could scarcely discriminate his stream of speech from his intake of food, except by noting that the

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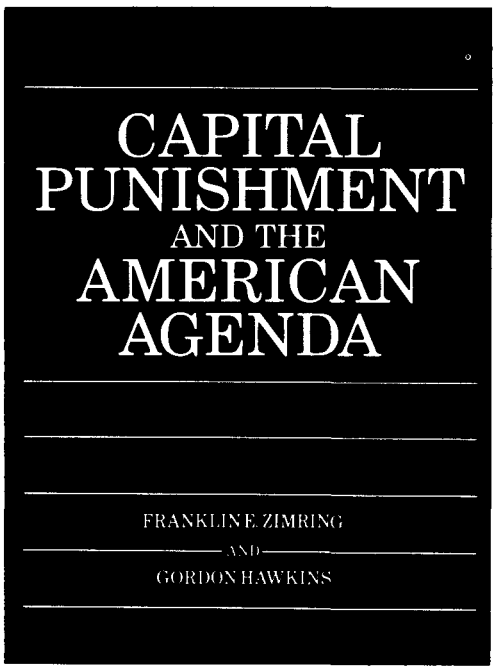

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food was going the other way. This consumption also had an infantile complement: if Wolfe was told something he could not bear to hear, he vomited. He often spoke of making love as devouring something delicious. His many casual sexual encounters had the finality of digestion: he is reported to have looked across the room at a woman who had minutes before sneaked off to the bedroom with him for a quick encounter, and asked who she was.

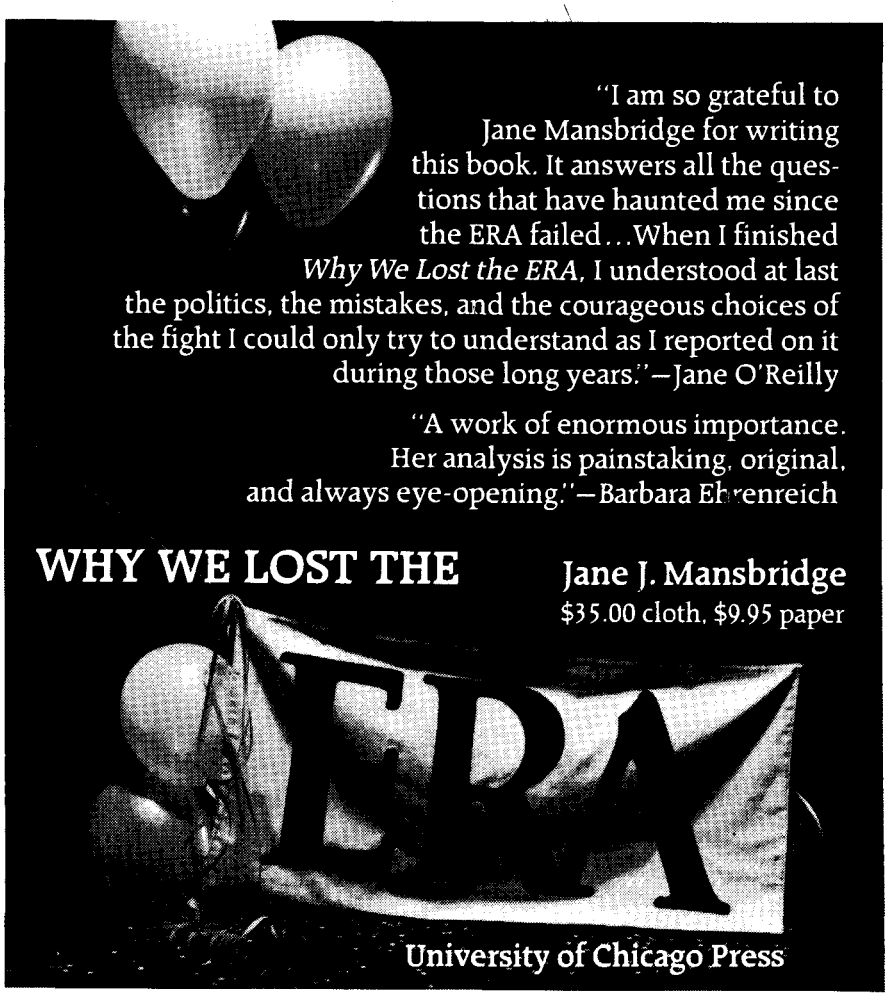
WOLFE SEEMS to have had no interior barriers to separate these activities and functions from each other. Donald is always cautious when offering evidence about Wolfe's emotional makeup, but he observes that Wolfe slept in his mother's bed until he was eight. (Donald conjectures that she had a practical reason for keeping her child there: avoiding her husband's embrace.) The boy was thereafter deprived not only of his place in her bed, but of her presence; she left his father's roof to run her newly purchased boardinghouse. Eugene Gant, Wolfe's representative in *Look Homeward Angel*, often slept at the boardinghouse.

But as guardian, or even, in some child's sense, as successful rival, to the father, the boy had lost his office. His absolute connection with his mother had been broken. The undersong that plays against his "goat cry," his exultant proclamation of future triumph, is "O lost." Wolfe once told Aswell that he had found a way to relieve a recurrent writer's block. He would do something he had done in childhood, which was to stand naked before an open window looking out over the city—and the Western world?—and fondle his penis. He wasn't masturbating, he said, simply confirming his sense of power—a power akin to that of the trains "stroking," as the pistons move in and out, their way across the land. This cosmic flasher is the biggest kid on the American block—trying, and failing, to bestride the continent. It is a pitiable spectacle. The stroking man had not achieved a satisfying connection with anyone since his childhood. This is the most striking and conclusive picture of Wolfe that the biography offers, and it seems only to intensify one's sense that the pathos of Wolfe's life is distinct from the effect he had on his readers.

But of course any attempt to deal with Wolfe must include a suggestion of how he affected those early readers. Disposing of one common misreading will help: Wolfe was not a Whitman in prose. Not simply because he was not a poet, in prose or otherwise—words do not glow, or affect each other in any way, when he brings them together; they are simply piled on as in invective, which is what he was best at—but rather because Wolfe doesn't assume Whitman's position, the stance from which Whitman wrote "Song of Myself." The attempt to take imaginative possession of the continent and its inhabitants can be made only if one can conceive of a self commensurate with what it claims. Whitman is foremost among those who tried. And there are others: Willa Cather's little girls, before they are confined by their sexual and social roles, enjoy a sense of undivided command of their world. Wolfe and those who represent him in his novels are tracing a path to glory in the eyes of others—not claiming all history as a part of their own experience but striving to make their own lives count as history. They are not visionaries. What Whitman steered altogether clear of in "Song of Myself" was the assumption of an exclusive, personal character, which is a fatal limitation for the visionary. Wolfe, ever emerging from his family, is nothing if not a character acting in a world.

Wolfe's first novel, *Look Homeward Angel*, had literary power, a power exerted over many people and acknowledged by some whose testimony we still respect. When we say that it was the power of an adolescent exerted on adolescents, we are neglecting the fact that fervent responses to Wolfe seem to have ceased since the Second World War. His work is now in the keeping of professors.

Perhaps the most important fact about Wolfe's place in our culture is that he was first read during the Depression years. The Depression enforced a more inclusive view of the country. Commerce had knitted the regions together, and when the Depression came, it was a national illness that hit city and country alike. This may help explain why Wolfe's goat cry—a surge of self-absorbed youthful hope from someone making his way toward a city of promise, toward the bright Babylon of New York, the site of future possibilities (as well as the home of the masses whom he largely despised)—answered a widespread emotional need. Regret for the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lost world of childhood may have served to authenticate the narrative.

In 1940 an anthropologist, writing as "James West," published *Plainville, U.S.A.*, a study of a small town during the Depression years. He found that the adults he spoke to had lost the belief that they could convey any sense of an appropriate future to their children; they believed instead that each must create his or her own horizon of expectation. A little later we find Alfred Kazin observing that the absence of accepted guidelines dictates an imaginative creation of a sense of one's world. And in reading Robert Penn Warren's *Night Rider* (1939), we are confronted by a character who finds he must take on precisely such an imaginative responsibility. It is a familiar theme, then, but it is Thomas Wolfe who gave it peculiar poignancy during a period of cultural stress.

QUENTIN ANDERSON

Quentin Anderson is the author of *The Imperial Self* (Knopf) and a fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities. He is at work on a book about money in American writing.

SENTIMENTS AND SENTENCES

The Politics of Linguistics
by Frederick J. Newmeyer

(University of Chicago Press, 171 pp., $22.50)

Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use
by Noam Chomsky

(Praeger, 352 pp., $29.95, $9.95 paper)

Frederick Newmeyer has written a concise, useful, stimulating, and, in the end, rather incomplete book. In our age, language has acquired a powerful political sex appeal. Stalin's intervention in linguistics was as dramatic and decisive as his intervention in genetics, though much less harmful. In America, the one man who unquestionably transformed this important subject is also an extreme and celebrated critic of American policy: Noam Chomsky has not merely effected a Copernican revolution in linguistics, but he became for a time the epitome of the East Coast intelligentsia. I well remember a public lecture given in London by one of his best known American followers. The lecturer noted that adherence to Chomskian premises required no discussion, because such adherence simply defined his own class of people, and quipped: "Unless you accept them, they take away your passport and cancel your subscription to the *New York Review of Books*." But what exactly *are* the links between the abstract study of language and one's political stance?

The term "politics" in the title of Newmeyer's book can be interpreted narrowly to correspond to the "politics" of the behavioral scientists. Who gives linguists jobs, grants, attention, and under what conditions? Newmeyer provides us with a certain amount of entertaining and piquant information at this level—not exhaustive or fully documented, but a good start. Still, there are also politics in a deeper sense. What are the connections between one's vision of language and one's attitude toward social and political issues?

Newmeyer focuses on one issue in particular—the autonomy of linguistics. The autonomy of linguistics, or of language, seems implicit in the entire Chomskian approach, and the idea is provocative and offensive for many. It offends the romantics by its depersonalization of language and by its implicit downgrading of the idiosyncratic—whether it be the originality of an individual poet or the uniqueness of a single language. It offends the left, especially the Marxist left, by its lack of concern with sociolinguistics and by its refusal to see language as part of the social structure or "superstructure." There are some, of course, who are both romantics and leftists.

On the issue that separates champions of autonomous linguistics from the left, Newmeyer rather too easily awards the palm to the autonomists: "There is strong evidence . . . that grammar does lie outside the superstructure." The opposite conclusion would require "that whatever correlations exist between grammar and class not be coincidental. But such correlations *are* coincidental." Are they? Although Newmeyer does invoke British material in various parts of the book, he seems to have largely missed one very relevant postwar phenomenon—the ideas of the social psychologist Basil Bernstein, and their considerable impact. Newmeyer generally ignores Bernstein's work, mentioning him only tangentially, quoting and seeming to endorse a remark that most misleadingly accuses Bernstein of an anti-working-class bias. Newmeyer does invoke the work of an American scholar and critic of Bernstein, William Labov, who reached quite different conclusions; but judging from the passages quoted, the counterargument hinges on a rather narrow interpretation of the issue, and there is some life in the Bernstein hypothesis yet.

Bernstein's very influential theory concentrated on the formal, and most certainly non-coincidental, differences between middle-class and working-class speech in Britain. This was plausibly held to be very significant in explaining the difference between the school performance of middle-class and working-class children, and was much acclaimed and used by left-wing educational theorists. They certainly did not see Bernstein as a man with an anti-working-class bias; they saw him, rather, as a man who laid bare one of the mechanisms for discriminating against the working class.

The working-class "code" (Bernstein's term) permits or requires the speaker to be under the control of immediate stimuli, such as the status, tone, or posture of the interlocutor, thereby greatly restricting the full range of linguistically (but not socially or contextually) possible utterance. Hence Bernstein called it the "restricted code." The theory has inherent plausibility, and a good measure of empirical support; and as long as it is not effectively refuted, we certainly may not affirm that formal differences in speech have no social correlates. My own guess would be that "restricted codes" predominate throughout the history of mankind, and that the shift in the center of gravity toward elaborated or context-free speech is one of the most important and mysterious social changes ever to

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have taken place. The correlations may not work for grammar in a narrow sense, nor for the canonical classes of Marxist theory; but suitably deployed, the idea may yet yield a good deal.

In handling the quarrel between the proponents of autonomous linguistics and the humanist romantics, Newmeyer misses a chance to explore an issue that is still very much alive in this century. Early in the book, he gives the impression that the Romantic "organic" view of language, linked to comparative linguistics and the discovery and search for "roots," was killed by Darwinism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The romantic or organic view was deployed to underwrite the validity of unique and idiosyncratic cultures, and hence to undermine the idea of a single, authoritative model of speech or thought. If one were asked to name only two people who have given language a philosophically high profile, the names would be those of two 20th-century writers, Wittgenstein and Chomsky. The former is strangely absent from this volume, though its terms of reference would seem to require his presence.

Wittgenstein's "mature" position starts out with the repudiation of the doctrine of a "universal grammar," which he had held and preached in his youth. The young Wittgenstein was led to a belief in a universal grammar, though this was not how he put it, by considerations quite different from those that later affected Chomsky, who reached such a view through the attempt to explain the human capacity to utter and comprehend an astonishing range of sentences. Wittgenstein started out with the assumption that the role of language was referential or representational (an assumption that is irrelevant to Chomsky), and by considering what there was, or conceivably could be, for a language to say. He worked out the answer to this question with the help of an uncritically assumed atomistic metaphysics, and the notation and ideas of set theory and modern logic. The answer had to be valid for everyone. If there seemed to be differences in the way people spoke, this was superficial, a matter of cosmetic abbreviations and accretions, with no real semantic function. The *real* function was performed in the same way by all people in all places and at all times.

Wittgenstein's later and widely influential views inverted all this and offered a theory that at most (though not all) points is diametrically opposed to Chomsky's. It is true that he no longer held language to be primarily or even predominantly referential; but otherwise the contrasts were marked. Chomsky's theory leads to an autonomous inquiry into grammar; for the later Wittgenstein, the diversified, pragmatic, and intimate social involvement of speech is of its very essence. The central Chomskian thesis is the idea of a universal grammar; the autonomy of languages, and of sublanguages too, is fundamental for Wittgenstein. The explanation of a formally universal competence is Chomsky's main aim; for Wittgenstein, culturally diversified forms of competence are logically terminal: they neither require nor allow any further explanation. To explain them would be to transcend linguistic custom and attain a translinguistic universal baseline, a binding Form of Thought or Form of Being, which in his youth he had thought mirrored each other. Now he firmly denied that either existed.

In the later Wittgenstein, "forms of life"—which would seem to be something like the de facto custom of speech communities, made up of people who just happen to comprehend each other—are ultimate and sovereign. The rules they impose are all their own. They are beholden to nothing. We can describe them, but we cannot ground them in anything; nor can we constrain them. And if we can't even identify the rules governing those "forms of life," we can hardly decide whether or not they exemplify a universal grammar. If they are tied to sovereign, idiosyncratic cultural communities, they cannot also be mere instances of such a general grammar. Language only recognizes customary law. It knows neither natural law nor natural justice.

Thus, with a new rationale and in a new style, Wittgenstein gave latter-day Romantics exactly what they had always wanted. He appeased, well in advance of the event, some of the sensibilities bound to be sorely irritated by the impersonality, the social and cultural disembodiment, the exclusively technical accessibility of the Chomskian vision of the springs of speech. Strangely enough, until very recently there has been, to the best of my knowledge, no major confrontation between the two great fashions.

MY IMPRESSION that no such confrontation has come to the surface until now is confirmed by Chomsky's latest work, published too late for Newmeyer's study. Here at long last Chomsky takes on this issue, though only in reaction to Saul Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982). As a result of Kripke's book, says Chomsky, the "problem has been clarified." I would not myself accept the suggestion that the main thrust of Wittgenstein's ideas had to await Kripke's exegesis to become manifest. The cultural claustrophilia or collective narcissism, the Wittgensteinian view that linguistic custom is diversified, sovereign, binding, and not further explicable, was conspicuous and well advertised long before Kripke's book.

The range of references and the general tone of the relevant chapter in Chomsky's book, however, strongly suggest that prior to Kripke's exegesis of Wittgenstein this particular problem remained unclear enough in Chomsky's mind at least not to have been properly faced. Chomsky does note, correctly, that the skepticism Kripke attributes to Wittgenstein concerning our ability to identify the rules governing a person's use of words is only a special case of a general skepticism about identifying the rule underlying *any* series. No series ever uniquely determines the rule that "explains" it—so other explanations are always possible. But it is in its narrow form, as a doctrine claiming that it is impossible to identify the "rules" people apply in using *words*, that it is relevant

THE LITTLE PROFESSOR

He is enamored of the secret sign,
The note covertly passed, the handshake's dark
And knowing eye. He prides himself a shark
In his small pond, his give-and-taking spine
Marked with a fin to signal his approach,
Circling someone he deems to have the Power:
To give such sweetness suck until it flower,
The flattery those cagey, wet lips broach.
Hidden agendas, meetings within meetings—
Across a crowded room, at lunch, he sends
A lover's glance, a form of manly greetings,
To prove he's on the Quest endorsed by Men.
Like Percival, he longs to track it down:
The midget car, the other twenty clowns.

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for Chomsky. After all, the specification of rules generating not individual words but the syntax into which they fit is Chomsky's central concern. He does not appear to have previously given full attention to this problem.

In Wittgenstein's "solution," the community turns up as a deus ex machina. People can be credited with possessing and understanding concepts, notwithstanding the impossibility of our ever identifying the rules governing our use of terms. Men can be credited with comprehension simply by virtue of their incorporation in a community whose members appear to tolerate each other semantically. Such membership in a shared-reaction group is all that "comprehension" can ever mean. Togetherness, not intellectual penetration of the nature of things, is what constitutes the life of the mind. As Groucho Marx might have said, I for one would not wish to join a community that understood people like me.

Why anyone should count this as a solution is totally beyond my understanding (though Kripke appears to be impressed). It looks to me much more like a dogmatic refusal to face the problem—like treating a mystery as its own solution. It shows a completely unwarranted determination to present the brute fact of semantic cohabitation as final, neither requiring nor allowing explanation.

The theory can be turned in upon itself. It is then entirely dependent on being presented to people who just happen to use terms such as "community" and "comprehension" in a way compatible with each other—and with this theory. If they nod happily when they talk to each other, all's well and the theory is vindicated. All truth comes to be at the mercy of contingent, unpredictable custom, and a willingness to nod together. The irrationalist Romantic cult of *Gemeinschaft* could hardly go any further. So Romanticism, which rejects both individualism and universalism in favor of the speech habits of cozy, inward-turned subgroups of humanity, is still very much alive and well, though readers of Newmeyer could easily get the opposite impression.

What it amounts to is a kind of sociogenetic nominalism and idealism. Society, and society alone, creates those clusterings of objects in terms of which we classify reality—so that it is impossible, without a vicious and unacceptable circularity, to invoke some "objective" clusterings or boundaries in "reality" as an explanation and/or justification of consensus. There can be no such "objective" validation, and each society is utterly sovereign in the way it makes up its own world. Our own civilization, however, is based on the contrary assumption, on the belief in an independent objective truth. But Wittgenstein, who was socially and historically colorblind and tone-deaf, did not notice this, or was not bothered by it.

THIS IS a truly extreme illustration of how abstract conceptions of language can have concrete political implications. Because (allegedly) there can be no comprehension without community, no conceptual loners are possible, and all cognitive individualism is out. Equally, there is not and can never be a universal human essence, only the authority of this, that, or the other contingent community of speech. My speech community, right or wrong! Our culture becomes our sole god. No appeal, either to transsocial truth or to individual autonomy, is possible. In practice, the full irrationalist potential of Wittgensteinianism was seldom deployed; in the main, during the height of its great Oxford-based fashion, it was only used to buttress the "common sense" of mid-century upper-middle-class Britain. But the potential for political abuse was there for anyone who cared to avail himself of it.

Wittgenstein's doctrine is totally useless as a basis for understanding our modern world. That world is not characterized by well-demarcated and well-insulated, and hence potentially sovereign, speech communities. On the contrary, it is distinguished by overlapping and bitterly contested rival communities-of-shared-comprehension. Custom cannot be our oracle if custom speaks with so many voices and we listen to them all. The deus ex machina offered by Wittgenstein is not available—or rather, there are far too many of these putative oracles about for any one of them really to be able to help us. With so many rival gods, how can we tell the true one?

This theory also precludes any understanding of modern science, which is of course based on the possibility of occasional successful defiance of conceptual consensus. The existence of cumulative and progressive science seems to prove that—contrary to what Wittgenstein claims—we have somehow or other found criteria of validity that transcend the contingent custom of speech communities. Individual conceptual innovation, such as is presupposed by a radical scientific advance, would seem to show that private meanings are indeed possible. Concepts are not inherently gregarious.

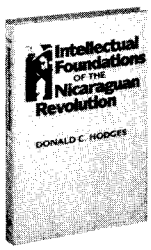
These matters are too deep to be settled briefly, and Chomsky's first attempt at handling them is a good deal less than lucid, as if written carelessly and in great haste. Apart from obscurity due to sloppy formulation, Chomsky's argument here is technical and arid—some might say pedantically so. Yet what hinges on all this are some of the deepest and most emotive issues in Western thought. Is it or is it not possible for us to break the bonds of our communities and their thought styles? Is there or is there not a universal reason, or must custom be king? Chomsky surely understands what is at issue, though one would never guess it from his style. Some might wish he would display more feeling in his abstract work, and less in his political writings.

Is there a connection between Chomsky's linguistics and his politics? If there were a close one, it would make things hard for people (such as myself) who admire his theoretical ideas but in no way

Of critical interest . . .

INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

By Donald C. Hodges



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share his politics. Newmeyer quotes a very convincing passage from Chomsky in which he says that indeed "there is no very direct connection." The implications of Chomsky's ideas are pervasive and important and complex, even if they allow no simple deduction of political recipes and frequently cut across conventional political alignments.

The central issue in working out the implications of Chomsky's work is the apparently odd and simultaneous insistence on free creativity *and* rigid prewiring. The paradoxical argument insists that the former requires the latter. I share this intuition, and I console myself for my inability to argue it with clarity by the reflection that Chomsky himself, in a passage quoted by Newmeyer, does not argue it very much better. Chomsky tries to convey it by pointing out that the creativity of art also presupposes rules—throwing cans of paint at a wall at random is not art. This is not a very good metaphor.

The kind of richness exemplified by language hinges on the modular deployment of certain elements. An isolated signal linked by a single convention to a given meaning or role needs, and has, no grammar. But a signal newly composed from a given store of elements, which could equally be used to compose many other similarly non-anticipated messages, can only work if the rules of its composition are tacitly understood. The central Chomskian insight is that those rules in turn are so complex, and so rich in their output, that they could not be acquired without a predisposition toward the kind of rules found operating in actual languages. A wide range of possibilities in the combination of elements presupposes the presence of firm rules for their combination. Only a properly prewired humanity could generate such a range of utterance (and conduct) without dissolving into something quite shapeless.

My guess is that this cluster of ideas will continue to have a great and fertile influence. Far from leading to "autonomous" linguistics, it is highly relevant to other social disciplines. For instance, I suspect that it will be relevant to attempts at reconstructing the early history of mankind undertaken by archeologists such as Lewis Binford. The central idea in these inquiries seems to be the attempt to locate the time at which behavior and tool-use became significantly diversified—in other words, the time at which the range of competence expanded dramatically. This expansion of the range is linked to the capacity to break up an activity into constituent parts and to recombine them in the light of need and circumstance. Behavior, one might say, seems to have acquired a more genuine grammar: it combines and recombines elements, and generates a far wider range of possible comportments.

The connection between this and the emergence of language proper is naturally intriguing. It is hard to imagine a community composed of individuals capable of highly diversified conduct but not also endowed with a sophisticated system of markers for restricting that diversity at any given point. My own guess is that language began not with conveying information but with the need, engendered by the capacity for highly diversified conduct, to constrain volatile conduct. In the beginning was the prohibition.

ERNEST GELLNER

Ernest Gellner is the author of, among other books, *The Devil in Modern Philosophy* (Routledge & Kegan Paul), *Nations and Nationalism* (Cornell University Press), and *Words and Things* (Routledge & Kegan Paul).

BRINGING UP ABY

Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography by E. H. Gombrich

(University of Chicago Press, 376 pp., $29.95)

Aby Warburg was the founder and first director of the institute that bears his name. E. H. Gombrich was the fifth director, reigning from 1959 until his retirement in 1976. Gombrich never met Warburg, who died in 1929, but he was appointed to a post at the institute in 1936 and assigned to work on the founder's papers. Eventually, and slowly, he came to see that he had to write this intellectual biography. He had familiarized himself with the mass of difficult notes and drafts Warburg left when he died; and he had knowledge of the biography begun but abandoned by Fritz Saxl, Warburg's colleague and successor. Gombrich started to write the book in 1946. When Saxl died in 1948, his successor, Gertrud Bing, who had been Warburg's assistant, also began a biography, which she destroyed unfinished. After her death in 1964, Gombrich saw that the job was now not going to be done by those who had known Warburg firsthand, and he returned to his old drafts and carried this book to a conclusion.

It was certainly a work of piety, but performed with "critical detachment," and of course at a much greater scholarly distance from the founder than Saxl or Bing could have maintained. Great labor was required, for Warburg was in every sense difficult to read. His notes were aphoristic and obscure, his personality complex. For many years he was little known to the larger world, except as the founder of the institute. He did not publish much on his own account, and had less fame as an art historian or theorist than as a provider of inspiration and facilities for others. The first edition of Gombrich's intellectual biography was appropriately published in the form of a learned monograph issued by the institute, with, presumably, a very small circulation. But much has happened since 1970. Gombrich has consolidated his position as one of the great art historians, so that everything he writes has importance. And the reputation of Warburg has grown, too, especially in Germany, but in America and England as well. This is partly due to the deserved fame of the institute, which is now, after all its adventures, a familiar element in the large London University complex in Bloomsbury. But it also appears that Warburg's intellectual achievements merit more attention.

Warburg was born in 1866 (a year after Yeats and H. G. Wells, a year before the first volume of *Das Kapital*). The eldest son of a rich Hamburg banker, he politely shunned his obvious destiny as future head of the firm, feeling himself more suited to a life of study. His choice of art history as his field seems to have

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given some anxiety to the family, who as conservative Jews objected not to scholarship, of course, but to the study of pagan and Christian images. Still, the family supported young Warburg's expensive habits, and he began early in life to collect a vast and idiosyncratic library, covering every aspect of his varied and recondite interests. He was always seeking evidence for a single overarching theory of the history of culture. This quest led him into many diverse fields of inquiry. Intellectually very ambitious, he was also cautious: hence the great mass of notes and the relative paucity of publication. He studied not only art, but such topics as costume and festivals, as well as medicine, astrology, and magic. He sat at the feet of many famous professors, spent much time in Florence, and went on collecting and making notes and developing, but not publishing, his theories.

The best single description of his "field" is his own: *das Nachleben der Antike*, "the afterlife of antiquity." It is also the central theme of the library. There is, of course, a special emphasis on Renaissance material. Gombrich regrets that the present institute translates the German phrase as "The History of the Classical Tradition," which is too restricted, and also misses an important element in Warburg's program: the study of the recurrence, as if from some collective cultural unconscious, of archaic, emotion-laden images at discrete moments in later history. One of these, for example, was the Nympha, so named by Leonardo da Vinci: a youthful female in floating draperies, found in some late quattrocento painting, notably in Ghirlandajo and Botticelli. Warburg would assemble many representations of this figure, from an antique maenad to a modern woman golfer, and display them on large screens for contemplation and comparison. A version of the technique, though not its mystique, survives in the modern practices of the institute.

GOMBRICH'S self-appointed task, meticulously accomplished, is to give an account of the formation of such ideas, partly by telling us what Warburg got from his teachers and partly by expounding the speculative writings that survive in his notebooks. Warburg's doctoral dissertation on Botticelli was original, and is still cited, but it doesn't fully reflect the impassioned quality of his interest in 15th-century Florentine art and life. What he achieved by his ef-

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We hear much about Jerusalem being one of the holy cities of the Moslem Arabs—the third most holy after Mecca and Medina. And also that solution of the "Middle East Problem" will not be possible until the Israeli Jews relinquish their "occupation" and restore the holy city—or, at the very minimum, its eastern part—to its "rightful owners," the Moslem Arabs.

What are the facts?

■ The startling reality is that before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Transjordanian invaders, claims to Jerusalem being an "Arab city" were rarely, if ever, asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side-by-side. It was *only* after the "old city," the part that contains the holy places of Christianity, and the only place holy to the Jewish religion, was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

■ To call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city is really stretching things. It is a notion that didn't come about until about 20 years ago and has now gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Al Aska Mosque. It's the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. What is the origin of that legend? Mohammed never in his lifetime set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Christians and Jews, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. It wasn't the Moslems or Mohammed who made Jerusalem a holy city. It was the Jews. In recognition of the city's holiness to the Jews, Moslems designated the Temple Mount as the place from which Mohammed ascended and built the Al Aska Mosque to commemmorate the event.

■ It's on the basis of this legend that the Moslem Arabs designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. The Israeli Government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, has largely acceded to this tradition and has made the area in and around the Al Aska Mosque off-limits to non-Moslems. No Israeli Jews can enter without the permission of the Moslem religious authorities. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, the Moslem legend had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished—and rightly so. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. On the tenuous claim to the Temple Mount, they have construed—although only since 1967—a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at the very least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city." And it would be an insult to all Moslems and all Arabs to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews."

■ But the city of Jerusalem—in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo, or Damascus—never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never even a provincial or a sub-provincial capital. It was the site of one "holy place," but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until about 20 years ago.

Jerusalem has been the motivation of Jews, its only holy city and its guiding light for over 2000 years. Over the centuries and through all tribulations, Jews never forgot Jerusalem and prayed daily for being able to return to it. Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there without interruption since the Biblical era and have been the majority population for most of the time. Jews have holy sites—synagogues and temples—in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem, based on the Al Aska Mosque on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 2000 years. That is why the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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forts (and with financial resources well beyond the scope of most scholars) was to make possible a far more richly informed study of the relations between the Renaissance and antiquity—and between the Renaissance and those "middle ages" the Renaissance invented—than was conceivable even to the great Burckhardt, whose *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, published in 1860, overshadowed all research in the second half of the century. Warburg's historical method was essential to those iconographical studies that for many are the characteristic achievements of his institute, and that are associated with such names as Wind and Panofsky.

But iconography was by no means the only product. Warburg's library and his photographic collection, though assembled to meet his own interests, opened up new perspectives for other scholars. He organized them on a principle that he called "the law of the good neighbor," arguing—as Saxl says in his "History of the Library," here printed as an appendix—that "the book of which one knew was in most cases not the book one wanted. The unknown neighbor on the shelf contained the vital information." And because of its arrangement, the library was intended to express something greater than the sum of the individual books it contained: "the thought of mankind in its constant and its changing aspects."

By 1909 the library was established in a large house in Hamburg. By 1914 Warburg was planning to turn it into an institute, with scholarships for young researchers. But the war held that up, and after it ended (perhaps partly as a result of it) Warburg suffered a grave mental disorder (probably schizophrenia) that kept him hospitalized for years. During his absence his associates organized the collections on a more accessible basis, and on his return in 1925 he acquired the house next door and started the institute.

After Warburg's death his family continued their support, but by 1933 it was obvious that a predominantly Jewish institution could have no safe place in Germany. There was an invitation from London, and with considerable panache Saxl and his staff loaded the entire library into a freighter and sailed up the Thames. After further vicissitudes, including another war, it finally settled in Bloomsbury. Most of the well-known names associated with the institute in its early days are retired or dead: Panofsky, Wittkower, Wind, Klibansky, Saxl, Cassirer. The organization has slowly but inevitably become anglicized. Frances Yates joined it in the early London days, D. P. Walker a bit later. The language you hear in the corridors is no longer German, and the present director, Gombrich's successor, is J. B. Trapp, a New Zealander. But the word Mnemosyne, the name of the goddess of memory, is still inscribed over the front door, and inside people still remember Warburg's dictum, "God dwells in detail." Critics such as myself, who can lay no claim to the sort of erudition associated with the institute, may nonetheless get more from a couple of hours there than from weeks anywhere else. "Mnemosyne" was the title of Warburg's great unwritten project. It was realized instead in the library, which is, for all the differences time has wrought, what Warburg wanted it to be, "an observation post for cultural history."

Gombrich's book is not a straight biography; it touches only lightly on Warburg's private life and catastrophic breakdown. From the point of view of the intellectual biographer, that event has significance only in the degree that it impinges on Warburg's work. He himself noted that he "tried to diagnose the schizophrenia of Western civilization from its images in an autobiographical reflex," and Gombrich shows that this was so. He also tells how Warburg persuaded the doctors to release him by giving an accomplished lecture on the serpent rituals of American Indians, whom he had visited in 1895. He believed that his own illness gave him insights into the "primitive"; the resurgence of the primitive in civilized life was, again, a central concern. The primitive images were originally dangerous, but when they recurred in a later evolutionary stage of society they were made beneficent by art and by culture. That society was progressively taming the primitive was a view that could hardly be expected to survive 1933, though it was common enough in Warburg's formative years.

ONE OF THE BENEFITS offered by Gombrich's book is an insight into an education, and into scholarly ambitions, scarcely conceivable in our time and place. People like Warburg wanted to know the way around all knowledge, to have a theory of everything. The vast expansion of data, the pressures of the academy, and perhaps even more important than these, our modern skepticism about such ambitions now make such undertakings seem almost crazy. Nor can we easily believe in history as a progressive liberation from archaic terrors. We can guess why the German defeat of 1918 so disturbed Warburg; and also, perhaps, why he disapproved of Freud, with whom one might in some ways have expected him to sympathize. There is a common interest in the archaic origins of human behavior, but Freud's usual view of the consequences of our prehistory is less optimistic than that of Warburg, who preferred to think of civilization as the enemy of inherited discontents, not as itself the cause of discontents. Freud's sexual emphasis would also have alienated Warburg: he belonged to a phase of civilization Freud helped to terminate.

Still, Warburg was wise enough to know that however acquisitive and original their minds, scholars are to some extent trapped in the intellectual world of their time, a world that will quite soon seem strange and oversimplified. "Of the general ideas to which I attach so much importance," he wrote, "it will perhaps

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be said or thought one day that there was at least one thing to be said for these erroneous schematisms, that they excited [me] to churn up individual facts which had been unknown before." And he knew that in order to see the importance of individual facts, you need a theory. Without one, however provisional, you won't find God in the detail.

Theories come and go, but the complicated patterns of theory that dominate the minds of intellectuals during a particular period are of great historical interest. It is in the delineation of such patterns that Gombrich here excels. What survives of Warburg is not the theory, but the theory-backed passion for detail. He also wanted to revise our whole way of looking at the past, and we are still interested in these proposed new perspectives. But our interest seems to be at a higher level. It is characteristic of our own time that instead of having theories about the *Nachleben*, we have theories about the *Nachleben* of the *Nachleben*, about how one pattern of understanding yielded to another (leaving it what inheritance?) and how that one yielded to ours, and why ours must in turn yield to another. Yet through these historiographical states there runs a tradition from which we benefit, and which we ought to try to understand.

It remains one of the rewards of creative scholarship to have the feeling of having sensed a whole world of knowledge in contemplating a detail. It is not a feeling anybody can expect to enjoy very often, and I suppose it could be said that, contrary to early humanist hopes, enduring fame is harder to achieve by means of scholarly inspiration than in almost any other way. When the belief-world of a great poet becomes obsolete, his work remains accessible for other reasons, by means of other qualities; but the achievements of the great scholarly synthesizers become simply material for historians, or mere curiosities. If one thinks of the scholars shown by Gombrich to be so important to Warburg—Carl Justi, Tito Vignoli, Hermann Usener, Karl Lamprecht, Richard Semon, Anton Springer—one has to ask how many of their names are now known even to educated people, let alone how many of them are read today. We read Burckhardt because he was a great writer. But if we want to know what Gottfried Semper or Alois Riegl thought, we prefer to find out from such secondary studies as Michael Podro's excellent *The Critical Historians of Art*. (Podro also discusses Wölfflin and Panofsky, but finally they are in a different league, because so many of their ideas have become part of the patterns we now think by. They enter, perhaps, the class of Burckhardt.) On the whole it is fair to say that time is cruel to scholars.

It seems unlikely that the name of Warburg would have stood with those of Burckhardt, Wölfflin, and Panofsky were it not that the practical consequence of his scholarly enterprise was a library and his intellectual bequest the rudiments, at least, of a method. The harvest has been rich, and it is all the richer for a clearer understanding of Warburg's mind and achievement. This is what Gombrich, working at so much crabbed and difficult detail, has provided. He and his publishers are to be congratulated on giving new and enlarged circulation to a book of quite unusual interest.

FRANK KERMODE

Frank Kermode is the author most recently of *Forms of Attention* (University of Chicago Press).

ROLL OVER, FICHTE

ROCK & REAGANISM

The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism by Robert Pattison

(Oxford University Press, 280 pp., $19.95)

Only an English professor could have written this book. This is the way rock 'n' roll looks to a man trapped inside the *Norton Anthology*. Robert Pattison's argument is easily summarized: "Rock is not an alien barbarism eating at the vitals of our culture," he says. "It is an organic development of Western Romanticism expressed in the vulgar mode. The art of Shelley and Tennyson, of Picasso and Pollock, proceeded from the same impulse that has produced Lou Reed and John Lydon."

The job of Pattison's book is to make every aspect of rock music seem a confirmation of this thesis. Thus rock's claim to have originated in the blues is said to reflect the Romantic yearning for the primitive (Rousseau, Nietzsche, Gauguin, Presley); rock's admiration for fast living and fancy electronics is explained as an outgrowth of the Romantic cult of the self (Emerson, Baudelaire, Whitman, Eddie Van Halen); rock's glorification of youth, its celebration of energy, and its contempt for formal education constitute an updated edition of Romantic pantheism (Swedenborg, Hegel, Wordsworth, the Ramones). The lyrics of rock songs, the antics of rock performers, the inanities of rock criticism are all "vulgarized" reflections of the highbrow tradition: "Nineteenth-century Romanticism lives on in the mass culture of the 20th century, and the Sex Pistols come to fulfill the prophecies of Shelley." Rock, in short, is spilt Romanticism.

The only way to do this sort of thing is to pull out all the stops on the organ of criticism. You can't put Fichte in the same sentence with Jim Morrison and then worry about trying to sound judicious. And Pattison is careful not to fall into the trap of appearing reasonable. When he spots a connection between rock music and some highbrow antecedent, he rarely lets common sense cloud the issue: "The four-minute bursts of words and music that make up rock songs are the popular incarnation of Poe's pantheist aesthetic," for instance; or, "The backbeat of rock is not so far after all from the Champagne Aria of *Don Giovanni*." And he has a charming way, in his discussions of rock philosophy, of treating rock musicians as though they were the authors of important articles in *Modern Philology*: "Elsewhere the Beach Boys elaborate on the principle of good vibrations"; " 'Take the world in a love embrace,' advises Steppenwolf"; "John Cougar states the rock case succinctly in 'Jack and Diane' "; "As Little Eva rightly observed . . . ."

If this seems absurd, it is absurd for a reason. The problem with most serious rock criticism—it is also the problem with most serious television criticism—is that there is almost no way to express intelligent admiration for an aesthetic object whose appeal so obviously has nothing to do with intelligence. If the critic of a rock song tries to discover what makes a song work by careful analysis, he invariably discovers too much. When Christo-

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pher Ricks, in *The Force of Poetry*, muses about the interesting placement of the word "your" in Bob Dylan's lines "Take it to your heart/Don't let it stray," the exercise seems wildly over the mark. It is as though the Supreme Court had been assembled to settle a parking ticket. If, on the other hand, the critic tries to respond to the music in the way a fan is supposed to respond, he usually ends up sounding like a cheerleader. When Greil Marcus, in *Mystery Train*, writes sentences like "'HIT IT!' Elvis cried, and Moore and Black rammed home music so tough it wasn't touched until Elvis pushed them into the earthquake that was 'Hound Dog,'" the effect is purely histrionic. It's like watching someone play air guitar while he's listening to his Walkman: his behavior may correspond perfectly to what is going on inside his head, but to everyone else he looks a little ridiculous.

One reason these critical efforts fall flat is that most people's enjoyment of popular music isn't nearly so discriminating. "Take it to your heart" may be a catchy line, but so is "Awop bop a loo mop a lop bam boom," and to undertake to analyze the particular excellences of all the songs one liked would be a task without end: one would eventually find oneself parsing the music of Archie Bell and the Drells. The virtue of Pattison's approach is that it is utterly indiscriminate. In his view, critical discrimination—the business of finding thoughtful ways of rating the Beatles against the Rolling Stones or Frankie Valli against Iggy Pop—is the hallmark of a refined sensibility, and refinement is the enemy of rock. So far as *The Triumph of Vulgarity* is concerned, Ozzy Osbourne is as good as Bob Dylan—rather better than Dylan in some respects, since the more blatant, the more predictable, the *grosser* the rock phenomenon, the better suited it is to Pattison's argument. For his point is not that rock music can occasionally attain the pitch of high aesthetic seriousness; it is that rock music takes all the features of highbrow art and vulgarizes them to the point where there is no longer anything high-minded or aesthetic or serious about them.

THE REAL TROUBLE with this book is not the absurdity of its style: the style is too loud because rock music is too loud. The real trouble is the absurdity of its thesis. *The Triumph of Vulgarity* suffers from the literature professor's disease of explaining everything by inserting it into a string of passages from famous books. So that one finds, for instance, in Pattison's attack on what he calls rock's "myth of the primitive"—the theory that rock developed through the appropriation by white musicians of black rhythm and blues—this sort of thing:

> Behind the grotesque stereotypes of *The Clansman* [the novel on which *The Birth of a Nation* was based] lies a white Romantic fear that man reduced to a pure state of nature is not a Noble Savage but a neolithic satyr. The chains of civilization so despised by Rousseau and his followers were in Conrad's time no longer manacles of oppression but gossamer webs feebly restraining the lycanthrope. Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* precedes *Heart of Darkness* by two years. Both are followed in due course by Freud's observation . . . .

This trick of turning the history of culture into an overenrolled honors seminar allows Pattison to skip over the irksome question of where Elvis Presley found the time to read Rousseau, and to get on to the really interesting matter of the influence of the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* on the music of Lou Reed. It is like saying that my haircut is the consequence of the French Revolution: no doubt the one thing can be traced back over the billion or so intervening causes to the other, but when one paints with this broad a brush, all the world is kin.

This is not to say that the myth is "true"—that white musicians understood the blues in the way that black blues players did. If whites trying to sound black had succeeded perfectly, we would not have had rock 'n' roll; we would have had more blues. Nor is it to say that whites didn't perceive black music through a scrim of pop-Romantic notions about the sexual vitality of the primitive and so forth (though this is a very incomplete picture of the interest in black culture in the '50s and '60s). It is only to say that whatever the cultural megatrends might have been, one day in 1954 the record producer Sam Phillips and Elvis Presley made a conscious decision to cover a blues number called "That's All Right," and everything like it that came after was called rock 'n' roll.

The important thing about Presley's version of the song, the reason it is rock, is that it is *not* indigenous music. It was an attempt to make a new product by imitating an original. Phillips's interest in recording "That's All Right" had nothing to do with Romanticism or with aesthetics. It had to do with money. "If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel," he is supposed to have said, "I could make a billion dollars." And when Phillips stopped running Presley, Colonel Parker took over.

THE CALCULATION is crucial; for the defining feature of rock music is its inauthenticity. Rock is the union of talent and commerce. The job of the talent is to play to the illusion that the rock musician really lives the life he sings. The job of the rock musician's commercial handlers is to predict what brand of inauthenticity will sell this season. "Rod isn't a star," Rod Stewart's manager once remarked. "He's a growth industry."

This sort of talk has given support to the idea that it is the managers and the record companies that corrupt the raw talent of the streets and co-opt it into MTV commercialism. But the beauty of rock is that talent is calculated, too—in no respect more so than in its contempt for "art." Someone should study the contribution of art colleges to Western culture in the postwar period. Their primary function has been to produce the creative staffs of ad agencies, but they have played a secondary role as the training ground for rock stars. Everyone knows that John Lennon was an art student; artiness was always part of his act. And that the Talking Heads met in art school. But Pete Townshend went to art college. Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page went to art college. *Keith Richards* went to art college. The Sex Pistols first played to art school audiences. John Doe and Exene of the L.A. punk band X met in a poetry workshop. (Mick Jagger, who has always seen future opportunities a little more clearly than most, went to the London School of Economics.)

There is nothing demystifying about saying this. One of the pleasures a rock performance gives comes at the instant one grasps that it is fake. For the great attraction of popular music is that it produces none of the anxiety that accompanies the high art experience—the anxiety of having to distinguish the genuine from the contrived. This is why the rock fan prefers Mick Jagger to Robert Johnson, Joe Cocker to Ray Charles—prefers the cover version to the original. And it is why almost everyone knows not to take rock music too seriously. The people who perform rock music know. The people who listen to rock music know. The only people who don't know are the people who write about it.

LOUIS MENAND

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Fifteen Minutes

A SELECTION FROM the results of a Nexis search on Fawn Hall conducted in the year 2005:

* "One of my friends told me Andy Warhol said everyone will be famous for 15 minutes—I kind of feel like that now."—Fawn Hall in the *Washington Post*, February 25, 1987.

* ". . . William Novak, who ghosted the best-selling *Iacocca*, expects the volume to be delivered ahead of schedule. Reports Novak: 'Unlike Lee, Fawn leaves the writing to me and sticks to typing the manuscript and correcting my errors. She's very efficient.' After managing scores of spooks, one ghost should be easy."—Chuck Conconi in the *Washington Post*, June 1987.

* "Is this the face that launched an invasion of Grenada? This month's cover of *Vogue* is proof that the visage of the tawny typist of NSC 'findings' is the only one left egg-free in the wake of Iranamok. Fawn, make me immune from prosecution with a kiss!"—Liz Smith in the *New York Daily News*, November 1987.

* ". . . *Vortex of History* proves that a woman *can* be involved in high-profile scandal without being a round-heeled bounder. Hall's memoirs are a model for the '80s working girl: she earned her infamy not on her back, but at her desk, with dedication and superb managerial skills . . ."—Sydney Biddle Barrows in the *New York Times Book Review*, January 1988.

* RIVERS: "But, I mean, it's like y'know, most of those models are anorexic! I mean, you've got quite a bit in the sweater department. Can we talk, Fawn? I mean, those aren't mosquito bites there. I mean, look what she's wearing, folks, I could never wear that!"—"The Late Show With Joan Rivers," February 1988.

* "THE LOVE BOAT," 9 p.m., Ch. 14—"A shy secretary (Fawn Hall) dissuades a vicious rebel leader (Ricardo Montalban) from commandeering the Love Boat for use in an insurrection against an island republic, then falls for his bookish, ne'er-do-well son (Desi Arnaz Jr.)."—*TV Guide*, September 1988.

* ". . . Guccione defended publication of the Hall photographs. 'I'm a professional journalist, I have a responsibility to bring this woman to the public. These are pictures of a wholesome American beauty. You can really see her shyness coming through . . .' "—*New York Times*, January 1989.

* ". . . Fawn Hall Buford, former actress/supermodel, now a mother of three, adds walnuts to hers for extra zip. 'If family or friends don't like them, you can always remove them after baking . . .' "—*Woman's Day*, March 2000.

* ". . . A mother of seven, Buford still finds time for church and her husband, Dub, who works long hours as Mr. Goodwrench to the sleepy town of Macksville, Ohio . . ."—*Where Are They Now?*, August 2005.

I AM SITTING in Mindy's restaurant on Broadway one cold night thinking what a cruel world it is, to be sure, when in walks a doll the acquaintance of which I have never made. She is tall and skinny and has on her kisser a permanent expression like her horse has still not crossed at Hialeah. Directly she makes for my table and I, having no scratch to stand drinks, quickly engross myself in reports of an upcoming prizefight and hope she will pass me by. But, because a night of bad luck can't become a night of good luck until the next night, what I hear is her voice saying, "Excuse me, Mr. Runyon, my name is Joyce Carol Oates. I've just written a book about boxing and I would very much like your opinion. May I join you?" Before I can tell her I have a most important engagement with one Hot Horse Herbie who, suddenly, I have nothing much against (though he owes me a number of C's and is nothing but a tout), she is sitting across from me and reading aloud in good English from her book (just out from Doubleday), the subject of which, I think, is the sweet science: "It might be theorized that fighting activates in certain people not only an adrenaline rush of exquisite pleasure but an atavistic self that, coupled with an instinctive sort of tissue-intelligence, a neurological swiftness unknown to 'average' men and women, makes for the born fighter. . . ." "Well, what do you think?" she asks me. "Very smart," I answer, then ask, "Did you pick the winner or the loser in that bout?" And she answers, "It's not about *a* boxing match, it's about *boxing*, and besides, I don't bet, I view boxing as America's tragic theater." "Is that so? Let me ask you, then, do you have any interest in the, say, 'tragic theater' of playing the horses?" "No." "Good," I say, "don't develop one."

A MOMENT OF SILENCE, please, for those who toil so hard to bring us so little. No, not the spooks at the NSC. I'm talking about the staff of *People* magazine. You read it on the toilet, flip it into the wastebasket as if you didn't care, then use its glossy gossip (without footnoting) to make small talk at cocktail parties. You wouldn't be so cavalier if you knew the blood, sweat, and tears that go into every issue. Take the February 16 number commemorating the death of Liberace. According to *f.y.i.*, the in-house organ of Time Inc., the Liberace issue was the latest "close" in the 13-year history of *People*. Why? *People* wanted Liberace on the cover *if* he died, but by the Wednesday morning press deadline, ". . . he was still clinging to life." Luckily the *People* staff have experience with recalcitrant stars (Cary Grant succumbed on a weekend and John Lennon was assassinated on a Monday night), so an alternate cover featuring Ann-Margret of the TV movie "The Two Mrs. Grenvilles" was ready in the wings. Finally, at 3 p.m. Hal Wingo, the assistant managing editor, threw in the towel: he started the press run of the Grenvilles issue. "Almost immediately," he recounts, "I was convinced that with my luck Liberace would be dead in two hours." At 5:40 p.m., Liberace went to the great Caesar's Palace in the sky, forcing Wingo to chomp hard on his cigar, push back his fedora, and bellow, "Stop the presses!" *People* had only learned the gravity of Liberace's illness 72 hours before deadline, but two staffers sharing "vigil duty outside the star's home" managed to file their reports by Tuesday morning, so senior writer Michelle Green could tack them on to a Liberace story the magazine had run two years earlier. Twenty-four hours later the issue headed for the presses, which were already behind on a one-million run of the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue. The delay cost *People* $32,000, but it was worth it: on Thursday, the Liberace issue was in the sweaty hands of the great unwashed.

A. P. W.

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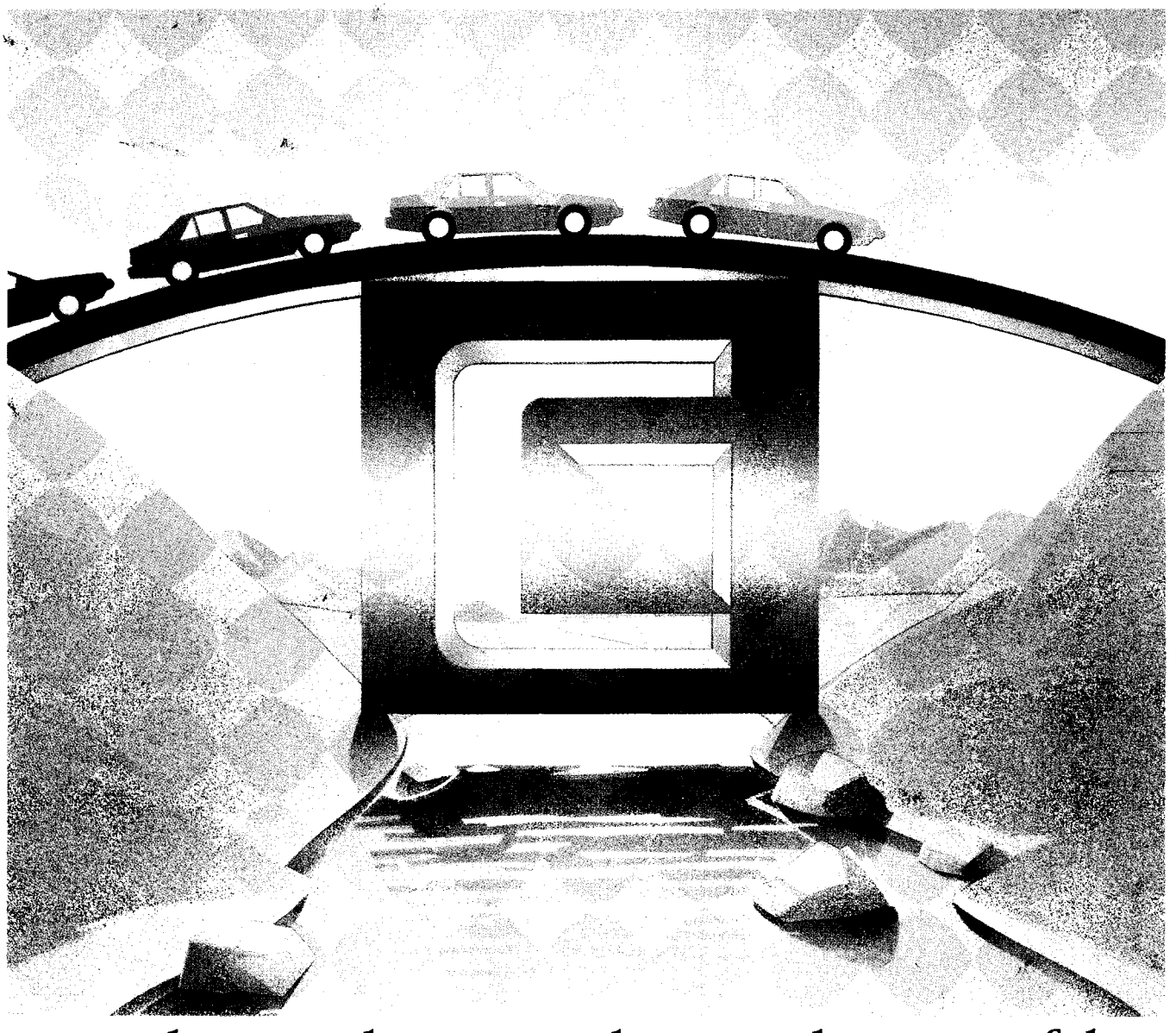

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